

Faculty of Theology
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GOD IS LOVE BUT LOVE IS NOT GOD

Studies on C. S. Lewis's Theology of Love

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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“Love? Do you know what it means?”

—C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

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ABSTRACT

C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) was one of the most influential Christian thinkers of the twentieth century with continuing relevance into the twenty-first. Despite growing academic interest in Lewis, many fields of inquiry remain largely unmapped in Lewis scholarship today. This compilation dissertation, consisting of an introductory overview together with four stand-alone but connected essays, extends critical understanding of Lewis's contribution to the theology of love.

In three of the four essays, Lewis's theology of love is compared to and contrasted with that of Anders Nygren (1890–1978); and in one, that of Augustine of Hippo. Using systematic textual analysis, the essays evaluate Lewis's key concepts, argumentation, and presuppositions.

Nygren, the Swedish Lutheran theologian and bishop of Lund, has virtually dominated modern theological discussion of love. His antithesis between selfless and gratuitous "Christian love" and self-seeking and needful "Pagan love", or *agape* and *eros* respectively, became enormously influential in twentieth century theology. Lewis was initially shaken up by Nygren's work, and it took him decades to formulate his own model, above all in *Surprised by Joy* (1955) and *The Four Loves* (1960).

It is shown that Lewis constructed not only his theology of love, but also his theology of spiritual desire as a form of love, in conscious opposition to Nygren. Lewis's theology of love challenges the denigration of *eros* and its separation from *agape*. Nygren's predestinarianism is also rejected. Lewis devises his own vocabulary, avoids the use of *eros* and *agape* in Nygren's sense, and hardly ever mentions Nygren by name. All this suggests a deliberate apologetic strategy to bypass certain defences of his readers and to avoid Nygren-dependency.

Despite their incommensurate love-taxonomies, Lewis's need-love/gift-love and Nygren's *eros/agape* have often been treated as parallels. This longstanding assumption is shown to be in need of greater nuance. The study demonstrates that Lewis's concept of spiritual longing, which he calls Joy, is relevant to the "Nygren debate" and serves as a potent variant for Nygren's *eros*. However, no one thing in Lewis's mental repertoire can serve as a perfect translation of Nygren's *eros*, because for Lewis it is an abstract caricature cut off from real life. In Lewis's theological vision, contra Nygren, spiritual longing, far from obfuscating the Gospel, is a God-given desire that prepares the way for it.

Lewis is not free from the occasional hyperbole or blind spot. For instance, his argument that romantic love is not eudaimonistic is shown to be somewhat convoluted, and his famous disagreement with Augustine is possibly based on a misunderstanding.

A perennial feature in Lewis's understanding of love, reflected in all four essays, is the ambiguity of love. Love is not something pejorative, but neither is it an infallible moral compass. God is love, but love is not God.

(Abstract in Finnish)

C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) oli 1900-luvun vaikutusvaltaisimpia kristillisiä ajattelijoita. Tänäkin päivänä hän on ajankohtainen ja laajalti luettu kirjailija. Kasvavasta akateemisesta kiinnostuksesta huolimatta Lewis-tutkimuksella on vielä paljon kartoitettavaa. Tämä artikkeliväitöskirja valottaa Lewisin näkemyksiä rakkauden teologiasta. Tutkimus koostuu johdannosta sekä neljästä itsenäisestä, mutta toisiaan täydentävästä artikkelista.

Kolme artikkeleista käsittelee Lewisin rakkauden teologiaa suhteessa Anders Nygrenin (1890–1978) näkemyksiin. Neljännessä artikkelissa Lewisin rakkauden teologiaa verrataan Augustinuksen ajatteluun. Väitöskirjan tutkimusmetodina on käytetty systemaattista analyysia. Metodin avulla Lewisin kirjallisesta tuotannosta on analysoitu aiheen kannalta keskeisiä käsitteitä, argumentteja ja ajattelun taustaoletuksia.

Anders Nygren, ruotsalainen luterilainen teologi ja Lundin piispa, on hallinnut rakkautta käsittelevää modernia teologista keskustelua. Nygren asetti vastakkain epäitsekkään ja vastikkeettoman ”kristillisen rakkauden” (*agape*) ja omaa etuaan etsivän ja puutteellisen ”pakanallisen rakkauden” (*eros*). Tämä erottelu osoittautui 1900-luvun teologiassa hyvin vaikutusvaltaiseksi. Myös Lewisiin Nygrenin työ vaikutti välittömästi. Lewis käytti vuosikymmeniä oman vastineensa muotoiluun, ja hän käsittelee aihetta erityisesti teoksissaan *Surprised by Joy* (1955, suom. *Ilon yllättämä*) ja *The Four Loves* (1960, suom. *Neljä rakkautta*).

Tämä väitöstutkimus osoittaa, että Lewis muotoili tietoisesti rakkauden teologiansa ja siihen sisältyvän hengellisen halun teologiansa vastustamaan Nygrenin näkemystä. Lewisin rakkauden teologia haastaa Nygrenin keskeisimmän väitteen. Lewisin mielestä eros-rakkautta ei ole syytä mustamaalata ja erottaa *agape*-rakkaudesta. Lewis laati aiheen käsittelylle oman sanaston ja vältti käyttämästä käsitteitä *eros* ja *agape* Nygrenin tarkoittamassa mielessä. Juuri koskaan Lewis ei kuitenkaan mainitse Nygreniä nimeltä. Tämä kaikki viittaa tarkoituksenmukaiseen apologeettiseen strategiaan. Yhtäältä Lewis pyrki kiertämään lukijoidensa mahdolliset ennakoasenteet, toisaalta välttämään teologiansa määrittymisen Nygrenin kautta.

Lewisin rakkaussanasto on rikasta. Hän puhuu esimerkiksi ”tarverakkaudesta” ja ”lahjarakkaudesta”. Vaikka Lewisin ja Nygrenin sanastot ovat yhteismitattomia, on Lewisin tarverakkaus/lahjarakkaus-luokittelu ja Nygrenin eros/*agape*-erottelu usein rinnastettu toisiinsa. Tämä sitkeä taipumus on syytä kyseenalaistaa. Tässä väitöskirjassa osoitetaan, että ”Nygren debatin” kannalta Lewisin näkemys hengellisestä kaipauksesta on erityisen merkityksellinen. Lewis nimittää hengellistä kaipausta iloksi (*Joy*). Se on muunnelma Nygrenin eroksesta. Ilon keskeisyydestä huolimatta Lewisin käsittekirjasta on vaikea nostaa esille vain yhtä vastinetta erokselle. Lewisille nygreniläinen eros-rakkaus on lopultakin vain abstrakti, todellista elämästä eristetty karikatyyri. Toisin kuin Nygrenillä, Lewisin teologisessa visiossa hengellinen kaipaus ei ole epäilyttävä asia. Hengellinen kaipaus on Jumalan lahjoittama halu, eikä se siten hämää evankeliumia. Pikemminkin kaipaus valmistaa ihmistä ilosanoman vastaanottamiseen.

Lewisin ajattelusta paljastuu myös kuolleita kulmia ja ajoittaista liioit-

telua. Esimerkiksi näkemys, jonka mukaan romanttinen rakkaus ei ole eudaimonistista, osoittautuu jokseenkin sekavaksi. On myös täysin mahdollista, että Lewisin kuuluisa erimielisyys Augustinuksen kanssa perustuu väärinymmärrykseen.

Kaikki neljä artikkelia tuovat analyyttisen katseen alle Lewisin rakkauskäsityksen keskeisen piirteen: rakkauden monimerkityksisyyden. Rakkautta ei tule halventaa, mutta se ei myöskään ole erehtymätön moraalikompassi. Jumala on rakkaus, mutta rakkaus ei ole Jumala.

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Living in England turned out to be an education in itself. It also gave me an opportunity to make new colleagues and friends. Being the C. S. Lewis capital of the world, many, but not all, of them are Inklings scholars: Judith Wolfe served as my academic advisor, Walter Hooper took me under his affectionate wing, David Baird offered wisdom and friendship, Ryan Pemberton encouraged me to run for President of the C. S. Lewis Society, Alister McGrath was always available – which for such a prolific author is a miracle. Werner Jeanrond, one of the leading experts on the theology of love and yet another unofficial supervisor, has given me a new academic home. St Benet's Hall is a marvellous interdisciplinary institution. I am honoured to belong to its ranks of fellows, tutors, and students, and not only because our Boat Club has offered a much-appreciated waterbalance to time spent indoors.

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Oxford, 20th June 2015
Jason Lepojärvi

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 C. S. Lewis Scholarship: Past Neglect and Present Concerns

“[I]t is only a matter of time before courses on ‘The Theology of C. S. Lewis’ make their appearance in leading seminaries and universities”, Alister McGrath ventures to guess in his recent book on Lewis, which ends with the confession: “Indeed, I am tempted to develop one such course myself.”¹ The temptation that has overtaken McGrath is common to many (I myself succumbed to it some years ago), and the prognosis he offers is significant for two reasons. It points both forwards and backwards. As an indicator of academia’s *growing interest* in Lewis, it also bespeaks *past neglect* of him.

Why has academic theology, especially in Europe, often ignored Lewis in the past? Reasons are, of course, many and complex. C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) was a disputed figure already during his lifetime. At opposite ends of the spectrum are a suspicion of Lewis and a suspicion of his critics. The following diagnosis offered by J. R. R. Tolkien (1892–1973), himself a fellow Oxonian, defends Lewis against a certain kind of critic:

In Oxford, you are forgiven for writing only two kinds of books. You may write books on your own subject whatever that is, literature, or science, or history. And you may write detective stories because all dons at some time get the flu, and they have to have something to read in bed. But what you are *not* forgiven is writing popular works, such as Jack did on theology, and *especially* if they win international success as his did.²

Another friend (only friends called Lewis “Jack”) remembers that when Lewis was nominated for Professor of Poetry, two dons casually remarked: “‘Shall we go and cast our votes against C. S. Lewis?’ Not, that is, *for* the

¹ McGrath 2014, 178–179.

² Quoted in Michell 1998, 7. The Oxford philosopher J. R. Lucas concurs in his Riddell Lecture: “If he [Lewis] could be understood by Leading Aircraftsmen and ordinary citizens doing their firewatching roster, he could not be profound enough to engage the attention of people clever enough to be at Oxford” (Lucas 1992).

other chap.”³ The philosopher Victor Reppert, who in his doctoral thesis developed Lewis’s argument against naturalism, recalls how his examiners “told me I had written a good paper on reasons and causes, but the main problem with it was that I had chosen a ‘patsy’ (Lewis) to devote my energies to. [Lewis] was ... not worthy of serious discussion.”⁴

With this, we slide towards another set of answers. The real issue, according to McGrath, “is not Lewis’s popularity and literary winsomeness” – although McGrath too believes “these doubtless come into the picture”. Rather, it is “a suspicion that Lewis offers simplistic answers to complex questions, and fails to engage with recent theological writers in his discussions”.⁵ McGrath believes that both are fair concerns. Obviously the latter concern has more to do with the complicated question of whether or in what sense Lewis should be called “a theologian”, and less with whether he is a worthy topic for serious theological discussion. Lewis did “not clutter his ‘popular’ writing with footnotes and name-dropping”, as Caroline Simon has put it.⁶ While most ordinary readers and some academics consider this tendency meritorious, it has probably contributed to the impression (which McGrath states as fact) that “by failing to engage with more recent theological analyses, Lewis in effect disconnected himself from contemporary theological debate”.⁷

Academia’s neglect of Lewis is now largely in the past. Professional theologians, even in Europe, are increasingly engaging with Lewis. “Fifty years after Lewis’s death, he has *become* a theologian – not because Lewis himself has changed, but because attitudes toward him are shifting.”⁸ Despite standing outside the professional guild, Lewis has been a catalyst for many budding theologians advancing on to a serious study of the discipline. Academic interest in Lewis is growing, whether spontaneously or reluctantly

³ Vanauken 1980, 109. When Vanauken met Lewis in person for the first time, Lewis “suggested that it would be best not to talk of Christian matters in hall or common room. That was my first intimation that some of the other Fellows at Magdalen [College], as well as other dons in the university, were not altogether cheerful about his Christian vocation” (109).

⁴ Reppert 2003, 11–15, here 15.

⁵ McGrath 2014, 165.

⁶ Simon 2010, 152. The irony of this footnote cannot go unnoticed.

⁷ McGrath 2014, 165.

⁸ McGrath 2014, 178.

in order to meet a demand. The guild is realizing that it cannot afford to disregard him, as the editors of *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis* (itself a recent robust work on Lewis) have warned: “For good or ill, literally millions of people have had their understanding of Christianity decisively shaped by his writings... for good or ill, he is too important to be ignored.”⁹

Professional theologians may have overlooked his significance of Lewis, but the loyalty of his ordinary readers has been more or less unflinching. Survey after survey¹⁰ has proved Lewis’s own prediction – that his books would sink into posthumous oblivion¹¹ – spectacularly wrong. This has recently prompted *Washington Post* reporter Michael Dirda to announce: “Lewis was clearly no prophet.”¹² MacSwain calls Lewis “almost certainly the most influential religious author of the twentieth century, in English or in any other language”.¹³ McGrath refers to Lewis as “one of the most influential Christian writers of the twentieth century, with continuing relevance into the twenty first”.¹⁴ What is more, Lewis’s popularity uniquely transcends denominational borders. Roman Catholic readers figure in the millions,¹⁵ and speaking for many Eastern Orthodox readers, Bishop Kallistos Ware has repeatedly branded Lewis an “anonymous Orthodox” (or hijacked him as such, not unjustifiably).¹⁶ Put simply, Lewis is inter-denominationally loved by the Christian masses.

Popular piety, however, is not always self-corrective. Sometimes it can be self-justifying. Lewis feared that in the lives of some Christians, especially Roman Catholics, Mary might loom unhealthily large.¹⁷ Little could he have guessed that fifty years after his death, in the lives of some Christians Lewis *himself* might loom unhealthily large. His biographer A. N. Wilson has

⁹ MacSwain and Ward 2010, 1–4, here 3. The most recent modern theological anthology (Kristiansen and Rise 2013) is possibly the first of its kind to include a chapter on Lewis.

¹⁰ See MacSwain and Ward 2010, 1 n. 2, and McGrath 2014, 176.

¹¹ Lewis 2006, 150. See also Hooper 1998b, 41.

¹² Dirda 2013.

¹³ MacSwain and Ward 2010, 3.

¹⁴ McGrath 2014, 176.

¹⁵ For a compilation of prominent Catholic readers of Lewis, see Pearce 2013. Sheldon Vanauken (1985, 217–218), another Catholic convert, has called Lewis the “New Moses” who through his crypto-Catholic writings has led many to the promised land of the Catholic Church without entering it himself.

¹⁶ Ware 2011 and Ware 1998, esp. 68–69.

¹⁷ See Lewis 2004, 645–647, and Lewis 2006, 209–210. For a critical take on Lewis’s objection to Marian devotion see Lepojärvi 2014a, 12–14.

spoken of “Lewis idolatry”,¹⁸ and his atheist critic John Beversluis worries about “the escalating hero-worship of Lewis (especially in America)”. Many books, Beversluis chides, “venerate Lewis to the point of transforming him into a cult figure”.¹⁹ These men hardly mean their accusations of idolatry literally; instead they want to poke holes into the uncritical loyalty of readers who consider the luminary Lewis not only inspirational but infallible.

A related problem is what MacSwain has coined “*Jacksplotation*”, a pun on Lewis’s nickname and the word *exploitation*. Lewis scholars, MacSwain laments, must sift through the mountain of books on Lewis that have little or no scholarly value but simply seek to “cash in” on his popularity.²⁰ There is so much money involved that to smuggle the name “C. S. Lewis” into the cover of one’s book generally guarantees moderate success. Hence all books with the words *Mere*, *Surprised*, or *Narnia* in the title are suspect until proven innocent.²¹ MacSwain insists that the concern over Jacksplotation is “not mere academic snobbery”, because it is a real problem that “inhibits objective appreciation of his legacy”.²² It impinges on our responsibility to form learned opinions of his thought and to assess their value.

What is the solution to this double-predicament? By its past neglect of Lewis, I would argue, academic theology is itself partly responsible for both the *idolization* and *exploitation* of Lewis. Cures are generally found in causes. The solution to the idolization and exploitation of any author is a double-solution. First, one must *return to the originals*: read closely what Lewis says, not only what other people say he says.²³ This was Lewis’s own prescription.²⁴ Second, we need *critical scholarship* on Lewis. By critical I do

¹⁸ Wilson 1990, xvi.

¹⁹ Beversluis 2007, 18.

²⁰ MacSwain and Ward 2010, 3 n. 7.

²¹ Of course many *are* proven innocent. For example, see my review (Lepojärvi 2012c) of Will Vaus’s *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of C. S. Lewis* (2004).

²² MacSwain and Ward, 2010, 3 n. 7.

²³ Many ideas and quotations are falsely attributed to Lewis, most famously and regrettably: “You don’t have a soul. You are a Soul. You have a body.” Such invented quotations or misattributions circulate the social media and are often as popular as any correct ones, if not more popular. For an examination of the most persistent misattributions and their likely origins, see O’Flaherty 2014. See also Root 2014.

²⁴ See his essay “On the Reading of Old Books” in Lewis 2000, 438–443. The final chapter of *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961) has some animadversions on evaluative criticism and the

not mean ‘fault-finding’ but using one’s judgement. It may be that using one’s judgement may lead to the uncovering of faults, but it is also possible that Lewis “might have something to teach academic theologians about their own subject”.²⁵ MacSwain is surely right in insisting that “[i]f only because he is so influential, scholars and students need to be familiar with the specific content of his many books in order to know (and if necessary counter or correct) his impact on the masses”.²⁶

This is precisely what the present study seeks to do. As a partial antidote to “Jacksplotation”, this doctoral dissertation is a humble contribution to Lewis scholarship in the field of the theology of love.

1.2 Theology of Love after Anders Nygren

The author whose work has virtually dominated twentieth-century theological discussions of love is the Swedish theologian Anders Nygren (1890–1978). Nygren’s magnum opus *Agape and Eros* (1932–1936) has had “an almost incalculable influence, although it itself may well spring from an idea that has always been present in Christendom”.²⁷

This idea is the antithesis between a good “Christian love” (selfless and gratuitous) and a bad “Pagan love” (self-seeking and needful) – or *agape* and *eros*, as Nygren called them. The history of Christian theology has been an intense struggle between the two, with significant losses (above all, Augustine’s failure to purge Christian love from erotic impurities) and one short-lived victory (the Reformation, during which Augustine’s *caritas*, the botched synthesis of *agape* and *eros*, “Luther smashed to pieces”).

Critical responses to this model – or story – are in no short supply. At the heart of most criticisms is that Nygren’s construal, both historical and theological, is a caricature. Some of these responses will be discussed in the four essays themselves, which make up the main body of this dissertation.

importance of returning “ad fontes”.

²⁵ MacSwain and Ward, 2010, 4.

²⁶ MacSwain and Ward, 2010, 4.

²⁷ Pieper 1997, 210.

For the purposes of this introductory overview, we must mention the *astounding longevity of Nygren's dichotomy*, especially as an object of unbroken assaults. Critics seem to have a love–hate relationship with Nygren. Even in their attacks, they often operate under the conditions imposed by him, and in formulating revisionist models find it difficult to break loose from the bounds of his taxonomy. As Risto Saarinen has poignantly observed, “Nygren’s model stubbornly refuses to die”.²⁸ Risking an academic cliché, we could label much of twentieth- and twenty-first-century theology of love as a footnote to Nygren.

This is not so much an accusation as a description. Much of the criticism against Nygren’s model has been justified, but the continual attention it has enjoyed has not been unjustified. Nicholas Wolterstorff, himself hardly a doting disciple, pays tribute to Nygren’s intellectual virtues even when mixed with academic vices: “It is fashionable today to be dismissive of Nygren: his theology is unacceptable, his exegesis untenable, his intellectual history questionable, and so forth. All true; nonetheless, both the systematic power of his thought and the range of his influence make him worthy of attention.”²⁹ Gene Outka admits that Nygren’s “critics have been legion, but few have ignored or been unaffected by his thesis”.³⁰ Werner Jeanrond draws attention to how Nygren’s dogmatic approach continues “to live in the respective collective subconscious of many scholars”.³¹

The Nygren debate, as it has been called, is still very much alive today. Nygren’s theology of love “continues to be discussed and disputed today, in works ranging from doctoral theses to papal encyclicals”.³² Pope Benedict XVI’s *Deus Caritas Est* (2005) is an example of the latter; and the present study, of the former.

Many will find it surprising to learn of the connection between Lewis and Nygren. Recall what McGrath had said about Lewis “disconnecting” himself from modern theological debates. Lewis may have failed to engage

²⁸ Saarinen 2012, 131.

²⁹ Wolterstorff 2008, 98.

³⁰ Outka 1972, 1.

³¹ Jeanrond 2010, 28. For helpful bibliographies of both older classics and modern treatments on love, whether theological, philosophical, ethical, or exegetical, see Jeanrond 2010, 7–8 (esp. notes 16–20).

³² Wolfe 2010, 1.

with many recent theological works, but *Agape and Eros* is not one of them. Not only did he read Nygren, he read him attentively: “I wonder if he [Nygren] is not trying to force on the conception of love an antithesis which it is the precise nature of love, in all its forms, to overcome... However, I must tackle him again. He has shaken me up extremely.”³³

Lewis was immediately conscious of the *complexity* of Nygren’s thesis. For instance, he at once noticed that the contrast between “self-seeking eros” and “selfless agape” was not the *only* contrast drawn. There were others. Theologically the most important was perhaps the contrast between a “wholly active God” and a “wholly passive man”. Lewis quickly homed in on Nygren’s predestinarianism.

What is perhaps even more surprising, in light of Lewis’s familiarity with Nygren’s model, is that in formulating his own theological vision of love much later, above all in *Surprised by Joy* (1955) and *The Four Loves* (1960), Lewis almost *avoids* the problem of “Nygren-dependency”. First of all, he rarely mentions Nygren by name. Excluding his private letters, Nygren is noted three times in all of Lewis’s public writings. Even on those three occasions, Nygren, intriguingly, is not openly criticized. What is more, it seems that only once does Lewis use the words *eros* and *agape* in the Nygrenian sense at all. Rather, he “makes his own terminology, and very useful it is”, as one early reviewer of *The Four Loves*, the English theologian V. A. Demant, noticed.³⁴ Lewis’s taxonomy of love is arguably more nuanced than Nygren’s.

Whether or not all this was part of a deliberate apologetic strategy (and I find it difficult to believe that it was not), it has in effect helped Lewis largely to avoid one of the *pitfalls of polemics*: that of remaining, in a sense, dependent on one’s adversary. In refusing to tackle Nygren head-on in his popular writings Lewis bypasses certain defences of his readers: as a result, only a few will ever have heard of Nygren’s book, but all of them will potentially be inoculated against its theses.

³³ Lewis 2004, 153–154.

³⁴ Demant 1960, 207, and continues: “Especially could it help those who found themselves lost in the more ponderous treatments of love by Nygren, de Rougemont and Father D’Arcy.” V. A. Demant (1893–1983) was at the time the Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford (1949–1971).

In this study, I have singled out some of these theses for closer inspection. This study is a compilation dissertation consisting of an introductory overview (Chapters 1–5) together with four stand-alone yet connected essays (Chapter 6). In what follows, I will outline the general aim of the study, briefly introduce the essay-specific objectives, and discuss some of the central methodological and source-critical decisions underpinning them all.

2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Outline of Objectives

The general aim of this dissertation is to help extend critical and appreciative understanding of C. S. Lewis's theology of love. In three of the four essays, Lewis's theology of love is compared to and contrasted with that of Nygren; and in one, that of Augustine. In the three Nygren-specific essays references to Augustine abound. As noted above, Augustine figures prominently (albeit ingloriously) in the story Nygren sought to tell, and in the theological misadventures he wanted to expose and correct. Augustine is at the crossroads of the Nygren debate.

The first essay, entitled "*C. S. Lewis and 'the Nygren Debate'*", is a pioneering study that opens the discussion and lays the foundation for the subsequent essays. Its purpose is to establish the basic parameters of the debate, and to establish Lewis's approximate position in it. Lewis's broader theological foundations, ethics, anthropology, hamartiology, and nuanced view of the relationship between nature and grace go a long way in explaining the major points of contention. Not all of these points are meticulously analysed: the essay is a general survey. It leaves many questions unresolved and opens up new ones. Of these questions, three central topics are passed on for closer scrutiny in the remaining three essays. These are love's relation to *happiness*, *vulnerability*, and *spiritual longing*.

As for the objective of the second essay, its title is almost self-explanatory: "*Does Eros Seek Happiness? A Critical Analysis of C. S. Lewis's Reply to Anders Nygren*". Nygren advanced the charge that human love is always eudaimonistic. It always aimed at the *happiness* of the lover and, as such, was morally bankrupt. In *The Four Loves* Lewis animatedly denies this. Romantic lovers, he claims, actually prefer unhappiness with the beloved to happiness without them. Saarinen believes that Lewis's use of the word 'happiness' is so close to Nygren's 'eudaimonia' that "the showdown must be

conscious”.³⁵ In this essay I follow up on Saarinen’s sleuthing. After presenting and deconstructing Lewis’s argument, however, I challenge it. Despite his protestations, Lewis is compelled to refine, even if not totally discard, his “reply” to Nygren.

Thomas Aquinas has spoken of how “out of love comes both joy and sadness”.³⁶ The third essay examines the latter association, that between love and *vulnerability*. “*A Friend’s Death: C. S. Lewis’s Disagreement with St. Augustine*” – the first part of this title is an allusion to the sorrowful story of the loss of Augustine’s unnamed friend, recounted in the fourth book of the *Confessions*. The second part alludes to Lewis’s hesitant but public rejection of what he took as the moral of the story: that vulnerability is a sign of misplaced love. This is the *only* time Lewis publicly disagrees with Augustine (whom he calls “a great saint and a great thinker to whom my own glad debts are incalculable”³⁷) on an important issue concerning love, providing the second compelling reason to incorporate Augustine into this study. Taking the cue from Eric Gregory who has noticed that “Lewis mistakenly refers to Augustine’s unnamed friend as ‘Nebridius’”,³⁸ this essay critically examines Lewis’s objection. Lewis’s poem “Scazons” (1933) serves as a literary backcloth for the more systematic analysis, helping, for instance, to highlight another concern (in connection to vulnerability) in Lewis’s response that easily goes unnoticed: the disputed legitimacy of *local loves* in light of the call to “love all in God”. Are particular loves and universal love compatible?

The final essay on love and *spiritual longing* is perhaps the most ambitious of the four in terms of subject, analysis, and thesis. Entitled “*Praeparatio Evangelica – or Daemonica? C. S. Lewis and Anders Nygren on Sehnsucht*”, it has two objectives. First, while many commentators have found a parallel between Nygren’s eros/agape distinction and Lewis’s need-love/gift-love distinction, this essay finds this parallel to be in need of greater nuance. Second, if need-love does not exhaustively capture and positively incorporate the multi-dimensionality of Nygren’s eros, what other concepts

³⁵ Saarinen 2006, 172 n. 15.

³⁶ *Summa Theologia*, II–II, 28, 1.

³⁷ Lewis 1960a, 137.

³⁸ Gregory 2008, 280 n. 73.

in Lewis's taxonomy of love catch the leftovers? When we drop Nygren's eros into Lewis's theology of love and look carefully, where does it land? This essay argues that it lands not far from Lewis's understanding of spiritual longing. The eros Nygren distrusted and the *Sehnsucht* that ultimately enticed Lewis to conversion surprisingly have much in common.

A perennial feature in Lewis's understanding of love, reflected in all four essays, is the *ambiguity of love*. Human love is a double-edged sword. It has been said of *The Four Loves* that it "is a philosophical proof of the inadequacy of the natural loves to bring us near to God".³⁹ This is put rather negatively, as Lewis argues equally and forcibly for the dignity of natural loves. A central principle in his thinking is "the highest does not stand without the lowest", an idea from *The Imitation of Christ* on which Lewis operates throughout *The Four Loves*.⁴⁰ In fact, it is "dangerous to press upon a man the duty of getting beyond the earthly love when his real difficulty lies in getting so far".⁴¹ No matter what Nygren believed, human love is not something pejorative.

But neither is it an infallible moral compass. *The Four Loves* illustrates how all earthly love relations, whether affection or friendship or eros, when detached from the allegiance of agape, may cajole the lover to sin. God is love, but love is not God. Human loves lack absolute trustworthiness as moral guides. The apostle John's maxim "God is love" is, in Lewis's mind, complemented or counter-balanced by Denis de Rougemont's maxim "love ceases to be a demon only when he ceases to be a god"⁴² – which Lewis rephrases as, love "begins to be a demon the moment he begins to be a god".⁴³ Love is not a demon, but it can become one. Many of Lewis's other works, too, from his early study *The Allegory of Love* (1936) to his last essay "We Have No 'Right to Happiness'" (1963), discuss the mechanics of a breed

³⁹ Malanga 2007, 80.

⁴⁰ Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (II, 10).

⁴¹ Lewis 1960a, 135.

⁴² This is Lewis's own rendering of the original French ("*Dés qu'il cesse d'être un dieu, il cesse d'être un démon*"). The authorized English translation is: "*In ceasing to be a god, he ceases to be a demon*" (De Rougemont 1983, 312). See the discussion of de Rougemont below in Chapter 3.2.3.

⁴³ Lewis 1960a, 15.

of love that has turned into “a sort of religion”.⁴⁴

2.2 Method and Interpretation

The primary method used in the four essays to uncover and examine the mechanics of love in Lewis’s thought has been systematic textual analysis. The primary sources (*texts*) or sections thereof are chosen for a close reading involving three-fold analysis. The three stages, often overlapping and elastic, are *concept analysis* (identifying and defining key concepts), *argumentation analysis* (identifying claims and scanning coherence of argumentation), and *presupposition analysis* (identifying overt presuppositions and unearthing covert ones).

Key concepts relevant to our study are examined over the course of the essays: Lewis’s need-love, gift-love, appreciative love, happiness, unhappiness, eros (distinct from Nygren’s eros), agape/charity, and Joy or *Sehnsucht* “which is [simply] German for longing, yearning”,⁴⁵ but is in Lewis never without transcendental implication. Nygren-specific concepts include eros, agape, and eudaimonia (happiness). No attempt has been made to *count* the number of appearances of any of these concepts. Even if possible, in this study such painstaking enumerations would have been unnecessary and even counter-productive.⁴⁶

As an author, Lewis is exceptionally forthcoming in expressing his views in accessible language, making his texts singularly suited for argumentation analysis. His nonfiction especially is replete in argumentation. In disclosing his own presuppositions, Lewis is admirably direct; even so, deeper undercurrents can occasionally be detected, such as varying degrees of “happiness” which Lewis fails to explicate and may even be oblivious to. Theological and anthropological presuppositions explain much of his train of thought and where it forms parallels with, or forks from, that of

⁴⁴ Lewis 1960a, 127.

⁴⁵ Barfield 2011, 133.

⁴⁶ For discussion of the relative advantages and disadvantages between qualitative and quantitative approaches in Lewis scholarship, see Ward 2012.

his interlocutors.

Hypotheses have not played an important role in this study. Questions are asked, but answers are worked towards without much preceding conjecture. In conducting research for the individual essays, I have entertained very few hypotheses, and stated even fewer in writing the essays. An example of an articulated hypothesis is that Joy may be a suitable variant of Nygren's eros. This is suggested in the first essay, strengthened in the second, and finally tested and (partially) confirmed in the last. An example of an unarticulated hypothesis is that Lewis's eros *truly* does not aim at happiness. For a long time I simply took Lewis at his word; however, closer inspection led me to doubt the purported disconnection between the two.

In assessing the sources, I have been ever conscious of the need to strike a healthy balance between a hermeneutic of charity and a hermeneutic of suspicion, and the difficulties involved in achieving it.

On the one hand, I have attempted to avoid theology's first besetting sin: *premature judgment*. Nygren's frustrating hyperbolism, and what I timidly call his theological tunnel vision, proved somewhat challenging in this respect. Lewis is often more temperate in his judgements – but not without occasional ambiguity. Suspending judgement has not always been easy. I have tried to remain mindful of MacSwain's words about Lewis's potential as a theological instructor. Benefit of the doubt is not always academic naivety.⁴⁷

On the other hand, I have aspired to avoid theology's second besetting sin: *premature panegyrics*. Here I must say that my previous reading and congenial preferences must serve as a dormant bias in favour of Lewis. But as there is no favour in favouritism, I have attempted to avoid undeserved adulation. Exacerbating the problem of "Jacksploitation" was not particularly high on my list of objectives. This all is to say that the spirit and tone of this study has been very much a balancing act.

An exemplar for all Lewis scholars, and perhaps for academics in gen-

⁴⁷ Janet Soskice's hypercritical engagement with Lewis on love is occasionally perceptive but not particularly commendable as criticism (2007, 157–180). She repeatedly misunderstands and misrepresents Lewis. Unfortunately Jeanrond, too, critiques Lewis out of context (2010, 206).

eral, must be Owen Barfield (1898–1997). Not many people can claim to have known Lewis’s intellectual life better than this lifelong friend, “the wisest and best of my unofficial teachers”, as the dedication on *The Allegory of Love* puts it. One cannot but admire Barfield’s humility in talking about Lewis. He is upfront especially about the limit of any inside perspective he may have had on Lewis. “After Lewis’s conversion”, he confesses, “we rarely touched on philosophy or metaphysics and, I think I can say, never did we touch at any length on theology”.⁴⁸ The discursive intercourse that earlier had defined their friendship had dwindled. “I really know no more of what he thought after his conversion than can be gathered from his published writings.”⁴⁹ That Barfield would place himself in the same boat (even if not the same cabin) with the rest of Lewis’s readers ought to instil in us humility.

It ought not to instil in us despair. Considering the challenges involved – regarding subject matter, objectives, methods, sources, and interpretation – the task of reconstructing and objectively evaluating Lewis’s thoughts on love might seem daunting, but it is not insuperable. Barfield believed that “the whole *esse* of Lewis was to be consistent”.⁵⁰ What Barfield said with characteristic understatement about the task of understanding Lewis on “certain primary matters” applies pre-eminently to our subject, love.

To understand accurately what Lewis believed about certain primary matters must, I think, be as important for those who admire and follow him, and would like to see his moral influence grow in the longer as well as the shorter run, as for his detractors and adversaries. It is a task which his perfect lucidity as a writer and his transparent honesty and outstanding consistency as a thinker do seem to bring within the bounds of possibility.⁵¹

Lewis may not have been a systematic theologian, but in his theology of love he was not unsystematic.⁵²

⁴⁸ Barfield 2011, 109–128, here at 110.

⁴⁹ Barfield 2011, 79.

⁵⁰ Barfield 2011, 78.

⁵¹ Barfield 2011, 81–82.

⁵² Showing Lewis’s consistency is “the whole *esse*” of Feinendegen 2008. For another systematic study of Lewis’s theology see Brazier 2012–2014.

2.3 Sources (I): Accounts over Expressions

Most of the essays benefited from *research trips* to the two most pertinent libraries for any study on Lewis: the archives of the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College, Illinois, and the Bodleian Library at Oxford University. Gaining access to the archives in Oxford in late 2010 was the single most important material breakthrough, for reasons I discuss later. I was able to return to Oxford as a visiting scholar for the academic year of 2012–2013, during which time I also served as the President of the Oxford University C. S. Lewis Society.

It would be slightly optimistic to say that Lewis's *personal library* remains intact today. Before the Wade Center acquired the bulk of the collection from Wroxton College in Oxfordshire in 1986, a number of volumes had gone missing.⁵³ That being said, the Wade Collection boasts a whopping 2,500 volumes (out of an estimated 3,000). In late 2012, I spent a week perusing the catalogues, ordering up promising items, trying (unsuccessfully) to locate one source in particular. The extensive collection of studies on Lewis solidified my growing inkling that the philosophy and theology of love was still largely an unmapped area in Lewis scholarship. Several studies were robust, but few were directly relevant.⁵⁴ Any lingering fear that I was reinventing the wheel soon dissipated.⁵⁵

A significant number (between 115–120) of the more coveted volumes from Lewis's personal library are not kept at the Wade Center but form the

⁵³ Hooper (1998a, 770–771) traces most stints of the library's adventures. Roger's study (1970) is an account of the library's time at Wroxton College.

⁵⁴ Three recent landmark studies on Lewis's theological and philosophical thought are Feinendegen 2008, Ward 2008, and Barkman 2009.

⁵⁵ Some of the most gratifying finds were reviews of *The Four Loves* from the very year of its publication (1960). To my knowledge, their content has not seen print since their original appearance. (The exception is Martin D'Arcy's review [1960], referenced in Hooper 1998a, 377.) Written mostly by notable theologians and philosophers, some reviews had picked up on the link to Nygren. One young scholar would become the most prominent of them all. In his review in the *Guardian* on 13 April 1960, the then thirty-one year old Alasdair MacIntyre says that his justified high hopes of Mr Lewis's *The Four Loves* had been dashed: "...his book is such a tangle of analysis and apologetics. More than that, his book does not *help*" (MacIntyre 1960, 13). Unfortunately MacIntyre did not explain why the book does not help readers, so his 180-word review does not help scholars. Eric Gregory has since drawn my attention to another original reviewer, Bernard Williams, prominent British philosopher. His review in the *Spectator* on 1 April 1960 charged Lewis with a "willed superficiality".

Walter Hooper Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. How they ended up there is another story.⁵⁶ This collection includes books from authors such as Aristotle, Dante, Homer, Hooker, Plato, Virgil, and so on – most of them underlined, annotated, and even self-indexed, as is customary for Lewis’s most prized literary possessions.⁵⁷

Nicholas Wolterstorff has described the difference between *The Problem of Pain* and *A Grief Observed* respectively as the difference between “an account of suffering” and “an expression of suffering”. “For those who want to know how Lewis thought suffering fits into a Christian understanding of reality”, Wolterstorff says, *The Problem of Pain* is “the basic text”. The genre of *A Grief Observed* is different. It is “not an account of but an expression of suffering – a cry over the death of his wife, Joy, from cancer”.⁵⁸

Wolterstorff’s description hits upon a distinction that cuts through much of Lewis’s writing, not just on suffering. It is reminiscent of two ways every mental act, two ways of attending to and communicating reality – one more cerebral and detached, the other more experiential and involved – which Lewis himself variously describes as “Contemplation” and “Enjoyment”,⁵⁹ “looking at” and “looking along”,⁶⁰ or “knowledge-about” (*savoir*) and “knowledge-by-acquaintance” (*connaitre*).⁶¹ Many of Lewis’s own works could be paired up along these lines. *The Abolition of Man* and *That Hideous Strength* respectively discuss and exemplify natural moral law; *Surprised by Joy* and *The Pilgrim’s Regress* explore and illustrate conversion driven by spiritual longing; and, as Peter Schakel notes, the central ideas of *The Four*

⁵⁶ Originally the number of volumes given to the University of North Carolina was 176 (Hooper 1998a, 770).

⁵⁷ When I attended the AAR/SBL conference in 2010 in Atlanta, and visited adjacent states including North Carolina, I was not aware of this collection, alas. In hindsight, the mishap was not as drastic as I had initially feared. However, I may have benefitted from studying Lewis’s annotated copies of Augustine’s *Confessions* in English and *De Civitate Dei* in Latin. On my next visit to Chapel Hill, I shall also look up Rudolf Otto’s *The Idea of the Holy* in English.

⁵⁸ Wolterstorff 2010, 5.

⁵⁹ Lewis first learnt of this distinction from Samuel Alexander’s *Space, Time, and Deity* (1920) and immediately adopted it as “an indispensable tool of thought” (Lewis 1955, 205–206, here 206).

⁶⁰ Lewis’s essay “Meditation in a Toolshed” (1945) is basically a popularization of Alexander’s distinction in these non-technical terms. See Lewis 2000, 607–610.

⁶¹ See, for instance, Lewis 1960a, 143; Lewis 1961, 139; Lewis 1964, 109; Lewis 2004, 206; Lewis 2006, 1173; and his essays “De Audiendis Poetis”, “The Anthropological Approach”, and “The Pains of Animals – A Problem in Theology” in Lewis 2000.

Loves “are embodied in literary form in *Till We Have Faces*”.⁶²

This dissertation wants to know how Lewis thought *love* fits into a Christian understanding of reality. Its *primary sources* (“basic texts”) have been Lewis’s *nonfiction*, the “accounts”. Two reasons nudged me towards a nonfictional focus. The first is obvious: the wealth of primary sources imposed an inevitable need for focus in general. Lewis’s literary legacy is comprised of a staggering “forty published books during his lifetime, not to mention numerous articles, poems and countless letters”.⁶³ By the same token, an over-ambitious scholar would have “great difficulty in coping with the many genres in which Lewis expresses his ideas”.⁶⁴ My training better equipped me to engage Lewis’s more analytical treatises: for literary criticism proper, a whole different set of tools would have been necessary.⁶⁵

This does not mean that literary sources have been *totally* ignored or excluded from this study. Many of them are deeply relevant to the Nygren debate. “Expressions” of love and longing have served an *ancillary* purpose: they have been incorporated into this study to support, supplement, or exemplify ideas and arguments extracted first from Lewis’s more analytical writings. References to the *Cosmic Trilogy*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, poems (most notably “Scazons”), among others, are scattered across the breadth of the four essays. For example, Saarinen believes that *Till We Have Faces* is even more critical of Nygren than *The Four Loves*.⁶⁶

Excluding sporadic references, the four essays include no *biographical* discussion. I do not intend to provide one here either. Gilbert Meilaender observed already in 1978 how biographical data is “rather wearisomely repeated in just about every book written on Lewis”.⁶⁷ The definitive biography of Lewis, however, is (I think) yet to be written. It will have to exhibit the strengths and avoid the limitations of the leading existing ones.

⁶² Schakel 2010, 286. Especially Orual’s character gives “concrete embodiment to ideas about love” (285).

⁶³ Vaus 2004, 231.

⁶⁴ Meilaender 2003, 3.

⁶⁵ Carnell (1999, 116) confesses that *Till We Have Faces* is a particularly difficult myth to interpret, for “there are aspects left over which do not fit in with any systematic approach”.

⁶⁶ Saarinen 2010, 344–346.

⁶⁷ Meilaender 2003, 2.

Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper's book (1974), "though rather perfunctory, comes close to being an authorized biography".⁶⁸ A. N. Wilson's work (1990, 1991) is the most entertaining and periodically probing, but it indulges in rather irresponsible psychoanalysis.⁶⁹ Lewis's pupil-turned-friend George Sayer's account (1988, 1997) is more temperate but less gripping than Wilson's. Most recently, Alister McGrath's well-researched study (2013) is naturally most up-to-date but somewhat uneven.⁷⁰ Lewis's definitive biography, in order to cover both his *life* and *ideas*, may actually require three volumes, divided roughly along the lines of Lewis's three-volume letter collection.⁷¹

2.4 Sources (II): Lewis on Nygren

As for Nygren's *Agape and Eros*, all four essays have referred to its authorized one-volume English edition (1953). Although my training allowed me to consult the original Swedish, this proved unnecessary. Virtually all commentators use the English edition.⁷² As is both fitting and paramount when translating theologically sophisticated opuses, *Den kristna kärlekstanken genom tiderna: Eros och Agape* (1930 and 1936) was translated by a fellow professional theologian, Philip S. Watson – and Nygren was evidently very pleased with the result. In the preface to the 1953 edition Nygren expresses his deep gratitude "to Professor Watson" for translating his thesis, which is "being republished without alteration".⁷³ Likewise, I have

⁶⁸ Meilaender 2003, 2 n. 3. Presumably, Meilaender is referring to the 1974 edition. Hooper revised and expanded it in 2002.

⁶⁹ See Meilaender 1990, Beversluis 1992, Smilde 2004.

⁷⁰ Arend Smilde's review essay (2014a) of the McGrath biography offers critical counter-balance to its numerous ovations. Other noteworthy biographies include Downing 2002 and Jacobs 2005. The former is strong on Lewis's literary formation and output and the latter focuses on his early philosophical and theological development.

⁷¹ If there is ample material in the life of Lewis's onetime pupil, the poet John Betjeman (1906–1984) to demand a three-volume biography (Hillier 1998–2004), this is no less true for Lewis.

⁷² Including Werner Jeanrond who, like Nygren, has served as the professor of systematic theology at Lund University, Sweden. In his *A Theology of Love* (2010, 113 n. 21) Jeanrond notes the Swedish original in a footnote, but otherwise engages with the English edition.

⁷³ Nygren 1969, xiii–iv. Philip S. Watson, himself a distinguished Luther scholar, was later to translate much of Nygren's most important subsequent work.

excluded Nygren's other works from this study, though I was aware of some of them.⁷⁴ Even if space and scope had allowed it, they are not necessary for understanding the self-contained thesis of *Agape and Eros*.

I noted above that one source proved especially elusive. It was *Lewis's copy of Nygren's book*. The evidence attests that what had originally "shaken up" Lewis was reading part one of *Agape and Eros*, which was published in English in 1932.⁷⁵ Regrettably, there are *no traces* of this edition, or any other edition, in the archives of the Bodleian library, the Wade Center, Chapel Hill, or in the collections of the most resourceful Lewis aficionados.

This is a shame. Were such a book ever to resurface it would conceivably be a goldmine for future research on Lewis, Nygren, and love, as it is likely to be underlined, annotated, and self-indexed. But what would have been the most pertinent source for my research does not seem to exist. The most probable but least breath-taking scenario is that, after "tackling him again", Lewis simply returned the book to his colleague in mint condition. After all, it was a loan. Whether or not he ever proceeded to acquire for himself or read subsequent editions is a remaining scruple to be discussed later.

Compensation for this wild-goose chase was an important breakthrough made in Oxford. At the outset of my research, I was aware of only two explicit references to Nygren in Lewis's writings. "Dr. Nygren" is mentioned in *Surprised by Joy*, and in a letter to Corbin Carnell, shared in his study *Bright Shadow of Reality*, Lewis had said Nygren's book gave him "a good 'load of thought'".⁷⁶ This led me to suspect there may be more epistolary tributes to Nygren.

Indeed, it turned out that there were six more. These included Lewis's candid immediate responses, snippets of which have been glimpsed above. Lewis's literary magnum opus *The Oxford History of English Literature in the Sixteenth Century: Excluding Drama* ("OHEL" among friends) also cites Nygren once. Lastly, honouring the fiftieth anniversary of Lewis's passing in

⁷⁴ Second to *Agape and Eros*, Nygren's most important work is probably *Meaning and Method* (1972) which utilizes the then new trends in analytic philosophy.

⁷⁵ See essay one (Lepojärvi 2011, 208 n. 2). The 1932 edition was translated by A. G. Hebert. Nygren says that it was "somewhat abridged" (1969, xiii).

⁷⁶ Carnell 1999, 69. Lewis 2006, 980.

2013, Cambridge University Press published a collection of Lewis's short pieces, among them the reprint of a 1938 book review that also instances Nygren once. This makes a total of *ten* explicit references to Nygren. More may yet crop up in the future: two of the letters were only discovered in the late 1990s.⁷⁷

Most of the references are brought into the essays in one way or another, but no one essay systematically analyses them all. As a helpful sounding board for the three Nygren-specific essays, but above all to encourage and facilitate further research into the subject, I have provided the references below. They are of unequal length and importance, and these do not always coincide. Some are one-sentence comments; others are multi-paragraph commentaries. The seven private letters are listed in chronological order, and the three public sources according to their year of publication. Five are from the 1930s, and five from the 1950s. This split is not irrelevant, as will become apparent later.⁷⁸ As noted above, I knew of only two references (9 and 10) at first. Seven references (1–4 and 6–8) were uncovered later and one (5) was brought to our collective attention in the jubilee year of 2013. The italics are all original.

#1. 1934: Letter to Janet Spens, dated 16 November 1934.

Can you tell me something more about Professor Nygren's *Eros and Agape*? I haven't heard of it.⁷⁹

#2. 1935: Letter to Janet Spens, dated 8 January 1935.

You will have begun to wonder if your *Agape & Eros* was lost forever! It is an intensely interesting book. I am inclined to think I disagree with him. His central contrast – that Agape is selfless and Eros self-regarding – seems at first unanswerable; but I wonder if he is not trying to force on the conception of love an antithesis which it is the precise nature of love, in all its forms, to overcome.

Then again, is the contrast between Agape (God active coming to man passive) and Eros (man by desire ascending to God qua passive object of desire) really so sharp? He may accuse me of a mere play upon words if I pointed out that in Aristotle's "He moves as the beloved" (κινεῖ ὡς ἐρωμενον

⁷⁷ Private correspondence with Walter Hooper (1 March 2010).

⁷⁸ See Chapter 4.1 below.

⁷⁹ Lewis 2004, 147.

[sic]) there is, after all, an active verb, *κινεῖ*. But is this merely a grammatical accident – is it not perhaps the real answer? Can the thing really be conceived in one way *or* the other? In real life it feels like both, and both, I suspect, are the same. Even on the human level does any one feel that the passive voice of the word *beloved* is really exclusive – that *to attract* is a – what do you call it – the opposite of a deponent? However, I must tackle him again. He has shaken me up extremely.⁸⁰

#3. 1935: Letter to Paul Elmer More, dated 5 April 1935.

The view I am *not* holding for the moment always seems unanswerable. Have you read Nygren's *Eros and Agape*? It is a closely related problem and leaves me equally puzzled.⁸¹

#4. 1935: Letter to Paul Elmer More, dated 23 May 1935.

Of Nygren, another time. I don't fully agree – Protestant is not for me a dyslogistic term.⁸²

#5. 1938: Review of Leone Ebreo's *The Philosophy of Love*.

Professor Nygren has emphasized the antagonism between systems based on Eros, the love of the lower for the higher, with an unmoved mover, an unloving Beloved, as the Highest of all, and those based on Agape, the love of higher for lower, where the Highest is a god conceived as purposive and capable of interfering in history. Philosophy, and specially Greek philosophy, inclines to the former: religious experience, and specially Jewish and Christian experience, to the latter. Spinoza walked the Eros road as far as any man has ever done: Abrabanel, with equal temptation to do so, obstinately refuses it, and his central problem is how to combine his philosophical conception of God as the Beloved with his religious conception of God as the Lover. He has two methods of doing so. One is to argue that Eros in practice is Agape, that love for the end or the Higher must work to raise the lower, since the perfection of the lower somehow or other (he is timid, though immovable, on this point) contributes to the perfection of the end. The other is to introduce within the Deity itself distinctions between God as self-loved, and God as self-lover, united to beget Love, which bring him to the verge of Trinitarianism.⁸³

⁸⁰ Lewis 2004, 153–154.

⁸¹ Lewis 2004, 158.

⁸² Lewis 2004, 165. Paul Elmer More had earlier replied to Lewis: “Yes, I have read *Agape and Eros*, and I don't like it at all, indeed I very heartily dislike it. It seems to me the last word of the most abominable form of Protestantism in a straight line from Luther through Barth” (letter dated 26 April 1935, cited in Lewis 2006, 164 n. 37 and 165 n. 38). Unfortunately there seems not to have been “another time” for continuing this titillatingly begun subject.

⁸³ Lewis 2013, 277–280, here 279–280. Abrabanel or Leone Ebreo (ca. 1465 –ca. 1523) was a Jewish poet and philosopher who is best known for his work *Philosophy of Love* (*Dialoghi d'amore*).

#6. 1954: *The Oxford History of English Literature in the Sixteenth Century: Excluding Drama.*

We know, if we are Christians, that glory is what awaits the faithful in heaven. We know, if we are Platonists – and a reading of Boethius would make us Platonists enough for this – that every inferior good attracts us only by being an image of the single real good... Earthly glory would never have moved us but by being a shadow or *idolon* of the Divine Glory, in which we are called to participate... Arthur is an embodiment of what Professor Nygren calls “Eros religion”, the thirst of the soul for the Perfection beyond the created universe... [Arthur’s experiences] must, it seems to me, be taken for a picture not of nascent ambition and desire for fame but either of natural or celestial love; and they are certainly not simply a picture of the former... The seeker must advance, with the possibility at each step of error, beyond the false Florimells to the true, and beyond the true Florimell to the Glory.⁸⁴

#7. 1954: Letter to Mary Van Deusen, dated 4 December 1954.

The great merit of Nygren, so far as I’m concerned, was that he gave one a new *tool of thought*: it is so v. [very] convenient and illuminating to be able to talk (and therefore to think) about the two elements of love as *Eros & Agape*. You notice that I say “elements”. That is because I think he drives his contrast too hard and even talks as if the one cd. [could] not exist where the other was. But surely in any good friendship or good marriage, tho’ Eros may have been the starting point, the two are always mixed and one slips out of one into the other a dozen times a day? ... I doubt whether even fallen man is *totally* incapable of Agape. It is prefigured even on the instinctive level. Maternal affection, even among animals, has the dawn of Agape. So, in a queer way, has even the sexual appetite, for each sex wants to give pleasure as well as to get it. So there is a soil even in nature for A. [Agape] to strike roots in, or a trellis up wh. [which] it can grow.⁸⁵

#8. 1955: Letter to Mary Van Deusen, dated 19 January 1955.

Yes: I wd. [would] certainly agree with “the disfigured image of God”; to some degree disfigured in the best of us, but still an image in the worst. Nygren is surely wrong if he says that merited love is sinful. It can’t be wrong to love the hand that feeds you. How much more wisely Christ put it: “if you love only them that do good to you, do not the Gentiles [do] as much?” i.e. not that it is sin (indeed not to do it wd. [would] be sin) but that it is no great matter, is elementary and merely natural. When we say to a boy of 17 “You ought to be ashamed of yourself, doing simple long division” we don’t mean that there’s anything wrong with long division but that he ought by now to have got on to something more advanced. Is it by some such *confusion* N. [Nygren] has got where he is? Still his book was well worth reading; we both have the v. [very] important idea of Eros and Agape now clearly in our minds, and can keep it

⁸⁴ Lewis 1954, 382–383.

⁸⁵ Lewis 2006, 538.

after we have let all his exaggerations fade out of our minds.⁸⁶

#9. 1955: *Surprised by Joy*.

But this was a religion that cost nothing. We could talk religiously about the Absolute: but there was no danger of Its doing anything about us. It was “there”; safely and immovably “there.” It would never come “here,” never (to be blunt) make a nuisance of Itself. This quasi-religion was all a one-way street; all *eros* (as Dr. Nygren would say) steaming up, but no *agape* darting down. There was nothing to fear; better still, nothing to obey.⁸⁷

#10. 1958: Letter to Corbin Scott Carnell, dated 13 October 1958.

Otto’s *Das Heilige* I have been deeply influenced by. Nygren’s *Eros & Agape* gave me a good “load of thought”, a useful classification instrument, tho’ I don’t think his own use of that instrument v. [very] profitable.⁸⁸

So much for Lewis’s ten references on Nygren. The final issue I would like to address before turning to reflection on the essays themselves is the chosen *publication forum*.

2.5 Publications: Casting the Net Wide

The overarching criterion that guided my deliberation in choosing the optimal publication venues was maximizing *broad international impact*. By “broad” I mean reaching both theologians and Lewis scholars, and by “international” I include both European and North American readership. With a mere four papers, this is easier said than done.

Casting the net wide like this, however, had two further advantages. I benefitted from continual feedback from interdisciplinary peer-reviewers, and gained vocational experience from engaging with different editorial philosophies.

The harvest of this cast is displayed in the figure below.

⁸⁶ Lewis 2006, 555.

⁸⁷ Lewis 1955, 198.

⁸⁸ Lewis 2006, 980.

	Lewis journals	Theology journals
European-based	<p>[1]</p> <p>“C. S. Lewis and ‘The Nygren Debate’”</p> <p><i>Chronicle of the Oxford University C. S. Lewis Society (or Journal of Inklings Studies)</i></p> <p>vol. 7 (2010) pp. 25–42 8 000 words</p>	<p>[2]</p> <p>“Does Eros Seek Happiness? A Critical Study of C. S. Lewis’s Reply to Anders Nygren”</p> <p><i>Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie</i></p> <p>vol. 53 (2011) pp. 208–224 8 500 words</p>
North American-based	<p>[3]</p> <p>“A Friend’s Death: C. S. Lewis’s Disagreement with St. Augustine”</p> <p><i>Sehnsucht: The C. S. Lewis Journal</i></p> <p>vol. 5/6 (2012) pp. 67–80 6 500 words</p>	<p>[4]</p> <p>“Praeparatio Evangelica – or Daemonica? C. S. Lewis and Anders Nygren on <i>Sehnsucht</i>”</p> <p><i>Harvard Theological Review</i></p> <p>(Accepted for publication) 13 000 words</p>

The first essay was published in *The Chronicle of the Oxford University C. S. Lewis Society*, known since 2011 as the *Journal of Inklings Studies (JIS)*. The recent transformation better reflects the journal’s broader interests: not only matters relating to Lewis but also to his peers and forebears. Today, this UK-based journal is a joint collaboration of the Oxford University C. S. Lewis Society, the Charles Williams Society, the Owen Barfield Literary Estate, and the G. K. Chesterton Library.

The second essay was published in *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie (NZSTh)*. What increased its appeal as a publication venue was its predominantly *German-speaking readership*. Excluding Josef Pieper, Pope Benedict XVI, the Austrian Cardinal Schönborn, and some others, few German-speaking theologians and

philosophers have shown interest in engaging Lewis.⁸⁹ For whatever reason, Lewis remains lesser known in German-speaking centres of learning than in many others. This is a shame, for “there is more to Lewis than can be said in English”.⁹⁰

The third essay was published in *Sehnsucht: The C. S. Lewis Journal*, the only double-blind peer-reviewed journal of its kind in North America. Unlike the leaner *JIS* that is issued twice annually, *Sehnsucht* is an annual tome. Two other notable North American-based journals are *VII: An Anglo-American Literary Review (SEVEN)*, a publication of the Wade Center, and the informatively titled *CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C. S. Lewis Society (CSL)*. Both *SEVEN* and *CSL* have long publication records (unbroken since 1980 and 1969 respectively), as did *The Canadian C. S. Lewis Journal* before its cessation in 2001.⁹¹

The fourth essay has long been accepted for publication in the *Harvard Theological Review (HTR)*. Due to editorial delays, the publication was pushed back to 2015.

While the four essays coincide in theme, Lewis on love, overlap of content and argument has been kept to a minimum. Due to multiple audiences, however, some incidental repetition has been inevitable. For example, Nygren’s thesis is introduced more than once. But in terms of argument and analysis, each essay is a stand-alone contribution to scholarship. Earlier versions have been presented as lectures and talks at various conferences and seminars. My gratitude for on-site feedback, some of it anonymous, far exceeds the people acknowledged in the essays themselves. As for spelling styles, reference apparatus, word limits, and other technicalities, I have of

⁸⁹ Lewis, however, showed interest in engaging German-speaking theologians and philosophers. There was one spectacular exception: “Barth I have never read, or not that I remember” (Lewis 2006, 980). This did not deter him from calling Barthianism “a flattening out of all things into common insignificance before the inscrutable Creator” (Lewis 1954, 449, also 453) – a description that, chimes McGrath, “has won him [Lewis] few theological admirers” (McGrath 2014, 179 n. 6). If McGrath is right it is only because few theologians are aware of it.

⁹⁰ Smilde 2013, 16. I do not object to Smilde’s suggestion that new and interesting light on Lewis “is now perhaps as likely to come from outside the English-speaking world as from within” (111).

⁹¹ The Canadian journal, though more popular than academic for most of its existence, contained a wealth of first person accounts from people who knew Lewis. Two collections were published in book form, see Schofield (1983) and Graham (2001).

course followed the in-house rules and peculiarities of each journal. While the essays vary in length, the arguments within are all equally compressed.

3 RESULTS AND REFLECTION

In this chapter, I will briefly reflect on each of the four essays. First, I will return to the principal objectives of the essay and discuss relevant exclusions. Second, I will highlight the key arguments of the essay and the contributions to the existing literature. Last, I will acknowledge and evaluate some potential limitations and weaknesses of the essay, and point out prospective avenues for further research.

3.1 Essay 1: C. S. Lewis and “the Nygren Debate”

3.1.1 Objectives

The first essay, entitled “C. S. Lewis and ‘the Nygren Debate’”, opens the discussion and sets the stage for the three subsequent essays. Its main *objective* is to compare and contrast Lewis and Nygren’s theologies of love. Locating Lewis’s approximate position in “the Nygren debate” requires first locating the basic parameters of the debate itself.

Two important *exclusions* are worth pointing out. First, as noted above, the essay’s principal concern is with *direct* evaluations between Lewis and Nygren, unmediated by Nygren’s other commentators and critics, whether his contemporaries or ours. Some of them are briefly introduced, but mainly for historical background. What I call “the Nygren debate” refers primarily to the disputed questions, not the cloud of disputants.

Second, the essay does not provide meticulous analyses of every point of contention. It is very much an *overview*. To accomplish this, it has been paramount not to follow up on every lead. Establishing even the proximate parameters of the debate (let alone Lewis’s position in it) is a tremendous challenge, because the debate is tremendous, touching nearly all aspects of life and tenets of doctrine. Indeed, this insight is one of the essay’s contributions.

3.1.2 Contributions

The results of essay one could be summed up under four headings: taxonomies, theologies, tactfulness, and teleology. Together they set the stage for future inquiries into the subject, making this essay, I hope, a useful, perhaps even an essential, contribution to the subject for anyone interested in Lewis's theology of love, especially vis-à-vis the eros versus agape question.

First, the essay shows how Lewis and Nygren's love-taxonomies are incommensurate. Their toolboxes are quite dissimilar, and the few shared concepts overlap only in name. While Nygren's arsenal displays two loaded concepts, eros and agape, Lewis approaches love with a multitude of concepts: need-love, gift-love, appreciative love, affection, friendship, eros, charity, and Joy (*Sehnsucht*), to name the most central ones. This makes comparing and contrasting their theologies of love a fascinating but toilsome affair.

Second, the essay shows how very dissimilar Lewis and Nygren's theologies are. They rarely see eye to eye. Lewis's theology of love can be traced back to his broader theological foundations and, above all, his theological anthropology. These go a long way in explaining where he stood in "the Nygren debate". For instance, Lewis would defend the role of evaluative reason, needfulness, and desire in authentic human love.

Thirdly, the essay shows that *The Four Loves* is not the only work by Lewis that is relevant to the Nygren debate. Nygrenian themes run through much of Lewis's writing, both accounts and expressions of love, and resurface in surprising locations. Lewis displays tactfulness in disagreeing with Nygren. The hidden disagreement with "Dr. Nygren" in *Surprised by Joy* is made explicit. Even when Nygren is not named (and most often he is not), the latent clash is probably intentional at times.

Fourthly, the essay shows how central Lewis's concept of spiritual longing (Joy/*Sehnsucht*) is to the discussion. This vein would later prove richest in terms of further research. For Lewis, there is a teleological connection between the desiring self and the highest good, a connection never wholly

severed by the fall. The relevance of Lewis's concept of Joy to the Nygren debate, especially as a potential variant of Nygren's eros, would later be confirmed by the help of additional documents on Nygren.

3.1.3 Further Research

The most glaring *limitation* of this first essay is that, at the time of writing it, I was aware of only two explicit and brief references to Nygren in Lewis's writings. I had not yet made my archival discoveries (see Chapter 2.4 above). Knowledge of the remaining eight references would have saved me a lot of trouble.

It would not, however, have affected the analysis. Nothing in the sleuthed sources actually detracts or undermines the analysis of the first essay. On the contrary, they buttress it. This is a sign of a close reading of the originally available sources – essay one had followed implicit evidence of what would later be corroborated explicitly. It is also a sign of the consistency of Lewis's thinking (see Barfield's description in Chapter 2.2). The greater patterns of its fabric are detectable even in partial light. The consistency allowed us to connect various dots, and in this case, the complete blueprint discovered later confirmed the results.

In addition to potent primary sources, I was ignorant of some secondary ones. For example, Gilbert Meilaender's 1978 study of Lewis's ethical thought, *The Taste for the Other*, makes relevant observations on the difference between Lewis and Nygren's theologies. Caroline Simon's article "On Love" in *The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis* (2010) also discusses Nygren, but it was published a little too late. Both of these studies, and more, have of course been consulted and incorporated into the subsequent three essays to supplement the bigger picture.

Some of the limitations of the four essays are not fundamental, but rather invitations for further research. This applies, for instance, to the somewhat underdeveloped section on *virtue ethics* ("*Ethics* before the *Summa*") in essay one. Lewis's virtue ethics has implications for his theology of love, because, for him, love is properly a virtue. Not many of these

implications are spelled out, however. “Nowhere does Lewis provide an extended discussion of a morality of virtue; yet, it is a matter of concern for him.”⁹² Lewis’s virtue ethics remains largely an unmapped area in scholarship. Protestant theologians who today are regaining interest in virtue theory might be intrigued to learn that one Protestant never abandoned it, and why.

What Lewis did abandon, and at a very early stage of his life, if he ever seriously entertained it, was the doctrine of *total depravity*. Human deprivation was deep, but not total. God’s image is “to some degree disfigured in the best of us, but still an image in the worst”.⁹³ Will Vaus has argued that Lewis “seems to misunderstand the doctrine of total depravity”⁹⁴ (at least in his treatment of it in *The Problem of Pain*). Vaus explains that this doctrine “means not, as Lewis suggests, that people are as bad as they could be but rather at no point are people as good as they should be”, and that “every aspect of a person’s being has been affected by sin, including the ability to choose”.⁹⁵ This would be worth investigating further. Did Lewis misunderstand this doctrine? What consequences does it have on his theology of love? My hypothesis is that regardless of precise doctrinal formulations, what Lewis ultimately objects to are certain anthropological presuppositions and a spirit that (to borrow extracts from Vaus himself) have led “some Christians writers [to] find pleasure itself to be sinful” and to nurture “a permanently horrified perception of our sin”.⁹⁶ Lewis was not the sort of man who would call human virtues “splendid vices”. Nor would he feel comfortable with a “Flacian” doctrine of sin.⁹⁷

This relates to another problem worthy of further analysis: the *goodness versus motive dilemma*. Nygren operates with one understanding of goodness and one only: goodness-as-motive. For him, they are unbreakably linked. If we acknowledge any goodness in the object of love, our love becomes erotic, “value-based” and “motivated”. But agapic love is “indiffer-

⁹² Meilaender 2003, 225–226.

⁹³ Lewis 2006, 555.

⁹⁴ Vaus 2004, 50.

⁹⁵ Vaus 2004, 50.

⁹⁶ Vaus 2004, 75, 181.

⁹⁷ Matthias Flacius (1520–1575) was the target of the article on Original Sin in the Formula of Concord, when it rejected the teaching that original sin is the substance or nature of man.

ent to value” and thus “unmotivated”, “altogether spontaneous”.⁹⁸ That the object could be in some sense good without that goodness becoming a damnable motive for love is not a viable option for Nygren.⁹⁹ This blind spot introduces a tremendous source of confusion into his model.

The causal connection between goodness and motive, in this form, can be challenged. Lewis himself challenges it *The Problem of Pain*: “Love may, indeed, love the beloved when her beauty is lost: but not because it is lost. Love may forgive all infirmities and love still in spite of them: but Love cannot cease to will their removal.”¹⁰⁰ Love is never “disinterested” in Nygren’s sense of the word. Although Lewis’s position is more nuanced than Nygren’s, his choice of words creates vagueness. What exactly does he mean by “losing one’s beauty”? My hypothesis is that, ultimately, Lewis does not believe “infirmities” can ever *totally* negate what he calls “our value in the Creator’s eyes”.¹⁰¹ Hence the references to “unlovable people” in his books cannot to be taken literally. There are no such things.¹⁰² What he means are people we find difficult to love.

Despite these unresolved ambiguities, could Lewis’s theology of love contribute to the goodness versus motive question? Lewis introduces a distinction into the notion of goodness in *The Problem of Pain*.¹⁰³ This is encouraging. Could we find another distinction, perhaps an implicit one, which could help solve the dilemma? I am thinking primarily of something along the lines of what Burnaby has called “natural goodness” and “ethical goodness”. By virtue of creation, the first kind of goodness is “unalterable”, while the second can be “lost or gained”.¹⁰⁴ Natural goodness is a *prerequisite* for love, regardless of motive. Goodness-as-prerequisite for love is the notion that Nygren’s theology of love, with its weak doctrine of creation, lacks.

⁹⁸ Nygren 1969, 75–77.

⁹⁹ See Wolterstorff 2010, 98.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis 1998b, 31–32.

¹⁰¹ Lewis 1998b, 32.

¹⁰² With the exception of one character in the *Cosmic Trilogy*, tellingly named “the Un-man”.

¹⁰³ Lewis 1998b, 89–90. Lewis speaks of “simple good” and “complex good”. The latter is created by God’s exploitation of our evil behaviour for redemptive purposes.

¹⁰⁴ Burnaby 2007, 40. Essay one makes a similar distinction (Lepojärvi 2010, 29). Nygren comes close to this distinction when he talks about God’s “entirely unmotivated, groundless love, which justifies not the man who is already *righteous and holy*, but precisely the *sinner*” (Nygren 1960, 687, emphasis added).

I aim to tackle some of the questions sketched above in future publications. As noted in the outline of objectives above, the first essay opened up three important questions that I have *already* confronted in the remaining essays of this study. They analyse love and happiness (essay 2), love and vulnerability (essay 3), and love and spiritual longing (essay 4). We now turn to the first of these.

3.2 Essay 2: Does Eros Seek Happiness?

3.2.1 Objectives

One of the arguments of essay one was that Lewis preoccupied himself with “Nygrenian” themes in several of his writings. Nygren is a likely target of some of Lewis’s arguments on love even if Lewis rarely names his opponent or even hints that one might exist. For example, in *The Four Loves* Lewis forcefully denies that eros aims at the happiness of the lover. The one who famously argued the opposite is, of course, Nygren. Saarinen surmises that Lewis’s use of the word ‘happiness’ is so close to Nygren’s ‘eudaimonia’ that the resulting clash is probably there by design.

The second essay, entitled “*Does Eros Seek Happiness? A Critical Analysis of C. S. Lewis’s Reply to Anders Nygren*”, follows up on Saarinen’s surmise. Its main *objective* is to examine Lewis’s dissatisfaction with what he calls Nygren’s “central contrast”, that between a self-regarding eros and a selfless agape.¹⁰⁵ This essay continues the investigation into both men’s theologies of love from a more focused angle. Is human love essentially eudaimonistic, seeking the happiness of the lover? Is human love selfish?

While examining Lewis’s answer and “reply” to Nygren, this essay brings in some of the new primary sources and secondary literature found after the publication of the first essay (see Chapter 2.4). This is its second objective. In doing so, essay two supplements, tests, and sharpens the investigation begun in essay one.

¹⁰⁵ I have also written on this elsewhere, see Lepojärvi 2013.

3.2.2 Contributions

This essay's argument is a cumulative one. It develops layer by layer as the analysis proceeds. I begin by deconstructing Lewis's argument in *The Four Loves* in which he claims that eros (romantic love) does not aim at the happiness of the lover, but would rather share unhappiness with the beloved than remain happy on any other terms. A careful analysis of what Lewis means by "happiness" and "unhappiness" exposes, however, that his argument is a bit convoluted.

In *The Four Loves* Lewis operates, probably unwittingly, with *two* notions of happiness. I argue that while his eros is indeed ready to renounce what can be called *conventional happiness* (health, wealth, home, and honour) it does so precisely in the name of a more *meaningful happiness* (above all, a life spent with the beloved). Despite his protestations, even Lewis's eros seeks happiness of a more lasting and meaningful kind. On this point, I show that he is compelled to agree with Nygren.

I bolster this argument by comparing and contrasting *The Four Loves* with Lewis's late essay "We Have No 'Right to Happiness'" (1963). In this essay, it becomes apparent, Lewis is more candid about eros's pursuit of happiness. The resulting seeming contradiction between *The Four Loves* and the essay erodes, at least partially, when filtered through the "conventional" versus "meaningful" distinction. More than this, however, the different *agendas* of the two texts help explain the difference of emphasis.

In this section of *The Four Loves*, essay two suggests, Lewis's *main concern* is to show that human love has an *agapic opening* – or "the dawn of agape" as Lewis elsewhere calls it.¹⁰⁶ Maternal and romantic loves are prime examples of love that is capable of towering personal sacrifices and thus overcomes Nygren's antithesis. What Lewis found revoltingly untrue is a concept of human love that by nature calculatingly demotes the beloved simply to a *means* by which personal happiness is sought.

While getting this point across, however, Lewis is driven to exaggeration by denying the happiness-seeking character of eros altogether. His eros

¹⁰⁶ Lewis 2006, 538. See Chapter 2.4 above.

can renounce conventional happiness, but it is not willing or even capable of renouncing meaningful happiness. However, this drive is *not* sinful: it is embedded in given human nature. For Nygren, it makes no difference what *kind* of happiness is pursued, because the real problem is the *pursuit* of happiness itself. On this anthropological presupposition Lewis's disagreement with Nygren continues to hold.

The distinction between 'conventional happiness' and 'meaningful happiness' is one of the essay's more valuable *contributions* to existing literature. It helps to make sense of one of the most important and animated arguments in *The Four Loves*. If Lewis operates with two notions of happiness unwittingly, as seems to be the case, the distinction may show up also elsewhere in his works. It may prove helpful for Lewis scholarship generally, not only on questions pertaining to love.

Another valuable contribution is the analysis, and first proper incorporation into Lewis scholarship, of some of the Nygren-specific commentary found in his lesser-known writings. This essay is also the first to point out that Lewis only refers to the first part of Nygren's *Agape and Eros*. Whether he ever read part two will be discussed later.

To help analyse Lewis's "reply" to Nygren, I deconstructed also Nygren's "eudaimonistic charge" against human love, breaking it down into four parts. This enabled me to elucidate a rather clustered charge and to pinpoint Lewis's deviation from it more delicately. The four-fold schematization of Nygren's argument might facilitate theological reflection of human desire(s) more broadly. I myself re-applied it in essay four while comparing and contrasting two fundamentally different approaches to spiritual desire.

3.2.3 Further Research

In essay one, I said that Lewis's concept of *spiritual longing*, what he calls Joy, is "relevant" to the Nygren debate, even suggesting that it has "surprisingly much in common" with Nygren's concept of eros. Essay two takes this up a notch. It suggests, albeit in the bracketed safety of a footnote, that Joy does not merely resemble Nygren's eros but may actually be "a more

comprehensive ‘translation’ of it than Lewis’s need-love. This compounds the motivation and pressure to investigate the issue properly.

The analysis of the nature and differences of *selfless and self-regarding love* could also be taken further. Essay two showed that, in Lewis’s mind, loves by their very nature ought to overcome this contrast. At their best, human loves do not instrumentalize the beloved for personal gain. Be that as it may, personal gain would not necessarily “stain” the act of love. Seeking a reward is not in itself wrong, not even in love. But surely it is sometimes? Under what circumstances does love become mercenary?

Lewis’s sermon “The Weight of Glory” sketches a fascinating answer, or the beginning of one. This is one of the key texts that ought to be consulted were one to deepen the analysis. Basically, Lewis distinguishes between different kinds of rewards. Their appropriateness (or lack of) hinges on the nature of their relation to the corresponding act. “Mercenary” rewards bear “no natural connection” with the act. “Proper” rewards, per contra, are “not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are *the activity itself in consummation*”.¹⁰⁷ Does Lewis’s guiding principle hold water? What is the proper reward of love?

A third question that merits closer attention is the role of Denis de Rougemont (1906–1985) on Lewis’s thinking. We noted earlier how de Rougemont’s maxim against idolatrous love (“love ceases to be a demon”) is one of the lodestars guiding readers through *The Four Loves*. It is also the key string in Lewis’s bow in “We Have No ‘Right to Happiness’”, so much so that one wonders whether the essay is not simply a popularization of de Rougemont’s moral argument in English.¹⁰⁸ What is more surprising in light of essay two is this: de Rougemont, too, operates with *two* kinds of happiness. In his review of de Rougemont’s book, Lewis dubs one “world ‘happiness’”,¹⁰⁹ and according to de Rougemont “beyond tragedy another

¹⁰⁷ Lewis 2000, 96–117, here 97, emphasis added.

¹⁰⁸ Astonishingly, even the passionate dynamics between “Mr A” and “Mrs B” find a precursor in de Rougemont (1983, 283–295 [Book VI, Chapters 4–6]). Lewis’s review of *Passion and Society* in the journal *Theology* (vol. 40 [June 1960], 459–461) has recently been republished in Lewis 2013, 59–62 (where the book is mistakenly referred to as *Poetry and Society*). A revised and augmented edition of de Rougemont’s books appeared in 1956, and in America under the name *Love in the Western World* for which it is best known today.

¹⁰⁹ Lewis 2013, 61: “...the modern notion according to which every marriage must have

happiness awaits”.¹¹⁰

De Rougemont’s influence on Lewis’s thinking is clearly one of the many still uncharted areas in Lewis scholarship. This influence, I now suspect, is wider than previously gathered. Lewis called de Rougemont’s book “indispensable”.¹¹¹ That its “absolutely first class *moral* thesis”¹¹² found its way into Lewis’s works is now obvious. But how many remember that one of the book’s chapters is titled “Curious and Inevitable Transpositions”?¹¹³ Years before Lewis, de Rougemont uses this term in the sense “given” to it in Lewis’s sermon-turned-essay “Transposition”. Perhaps instead of calling it “Lewis’s term”¹¹⁴ we have reason to speak of the term he adopted? Lewis’s heavily annotated copy of *L’Amour et l’Occident* awaits researchers in the archives of the Wade Center.¹¹⁵

Unlike de Rougemont, John Beversluis has not impacted Lewis: it is Lewis who has impacted John Beversluis. Beversluis is one of Lewis’s most outspoken and observant critics. Being “the first systematic and radical critique of C. S. Lewis’s theological arguments”, as Anthony Flew blurbed the first edition, Beversluis’s treatise has been the object of waves of rebuttals. It has recently been argued against Beversluis (and Peter Kreeft) that Lewis never intended to present his doctrine of spiritual longing as a self-contained, syllogistic argument for God’s existence.¹¹⁶ While this debate is interesting, I am most drawn to Beversluis’s *reading of Nygren against Lewis*. Essay two applauded him (in a footnote again) for being one of the first scholars to bring up the name Anders Nygren in connection with Lewis.

Beversluis summons Nygren to counter Lewis’s theology of love – but he is unaware of Lewis’s familiarity with, and rejection of, Nygren’s theses. Is this a mere peccadillo, a trivial oversight, or has it perhaps adumbrated the

‘falling in love’ [*eros*] as its efficient, and world ‘happiness’ as its final, cause.”

¹¹⁰ De Rougemont 1983, 323.

¹¹¹ Lewis 2013, 61.

¹¹² Lewis 2004, 379. Lewis discusses the book with his brother Warnie in a letter dated 29 March 1940.

¹¹³ De Rougemont 1983, 151–152, see also 162–166.

¹¹⁴ Brazier 2009, 680. What is more original in Lewis’s essay is the way he applies it “to the theology – or at least to the philosophy – of the Incarnation” (683).

¹¹⁵ The problem of tracing Lewis’s influences is a general one, with or without annotated copies. There may be countless further similar discoveries waiting to be made.

¹¹⁶ Smilde 2014b. Smilde is developing a point made by Feinendegen (2008).

resulting analysis? In essay four I seek to pay not uncritical respect to Beversluis. I think he is correct, for example, in suggesting that on the question of spiritual longing as *praeparatio evangelica* Lewis and Nygren must disagree. Lewis's teleological anthropology places him in the natural law tradition with "Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas",¹¹⁷ and (as far as Nygren is concerned) other untrustworthy guides on love.

It is with the insight from Aquinas that essay two ends: "Ex amore procedit et gaudium et tristitia", out of love comes both joy and sadness.¹¹⁸ This essay addressed the first association, that between love and happiness. The next essay proceeds to examine love and vulnerability. Lewis generally trusted Augustine, but even saints could err.

3.3 Essay 3: C. S. Lewis's Disagreement with St. Augustine

3.3.1 Objectives

The third essay is entitled "*A Friend's Death: C. S. Lewis's Disagreement with St Augustine*". In the Nygren-specific essays, references to Augustine abound. This is no coincidence: Augustine plays a central role in Nygren's understanding of the history and theology of Christian love. Basically, he is the villain of the piece. Intriguingly, the *only* time Lewis explicitly disagrees with Augustine, he does so on an important question on love. Essay three is an investigation of this rare disagreement.

In book four of *Confessions*, Augustine shares a story that poignantly reminded him of the frailty and dangers of human love. In *The Four Loves*, Lewis takes issue with what he considers the moral of Augustine's confession: that vulnerability is symptomatic of a misplaced or incomplete love. Taking the cue from Eric Gregory who notes that Lewis misnames Augustine's deceased friend (hence "A Friend's Death") as "Nebridius", essay three

¹¹⁷ Beversluis 2007, 48.

¹¹⁸ *Summa Theologia*, II-II, 28, 1.

returns to the death scene, so to speak, to investigate further. The case is obviously not a mere academic squabble, but of mandating relevance to everyday life.

The second objective is to analyse Lewis's poem "Scazons" (1933), and to use it as a literary backcloth for the disagreement. While Lewis probably did not have Augustine in mind when composing it, this early poem serves uncannily well as an "expression" of the "account" found in *The Four Loves* decades later. It also helps to show that in upholding love's vulnerability, Lewis also wanted to uphold its particularity.

3.3.2 Contributions

This essay investigates Lewis's famous disagreement with Augustine on whether intense grief over the death of a beloved is a sign of incomplete or misplaced love. Lewis suspected that Augustine's Platonic Christianity had not shaken off some of its non-Christian dust (at least at the time of writing the *Confessions*). The passage recounting the death of his dear friend is, Lewis thinks, an intellectual-spiritual hangover, with toxic whiffs of neo-Platonic mysticism and residual Stoicism.

Using Lewis's poem "Scazons" as a literary backdrop, I first argue that while Lewis agrees that sometimes intense grief is a sign of inordinate love, he rejects both what he took to be Augustine's overriding *diagnosis* (intense grief is the punitive result of excessive and particular loves) and his purported *solution* to inordinate love (one must love cautiously and impartially). The parallel analysis of the poem is no mere tag-on, but explicates the two-fold nature of Lewis's concern. Ultimately at stake is the legitimacy of both the vulnerability and the particularity of human love.

Lewis, however, does indeed misremember the name of Augustine's friend. Here I agree with Eric Gregory, and offer a likely explanation for the error: Augustine mentions his "dearest friend Nebridius" in close proximity to the death scene. Could this slip have led Lewis to miss the context as well? There are persuasive reasons to suppose Lewis not only misremembers but also misunderstands. Gregory's revisionist reading defends Augustine

against critics who detect in (or read into) him vestiges of Platonic spirituality and attraction to Stoic invulnerability. Augustine's grief, argues Gregory, is not that he loved "too much", but that he did not really love his friend at all.

My final verdict leans toward leaving the question open; not as a cop-out, but for lack of conclusive evidence. Lewis is right to detect something different in Augustine's attitude towards human loves, even if his post mortem goes wrong in a certain way. Augustine provides a wealth of material, some of it ambivalent, for *both* the revisionist reading *and* critics such as Hannah Arendt and Lewis. What is certain is – and this is my closing argument – that if Lewis misunderstood Augustine, it is merely a misunderstanding and not a fundamental disagreement. He can let out a theological sigh of relief for not having to disagree with this "great saint and a great thinker to whom [his] own glad debts are incalculable".¹¹⁹

3.3.3 Further Research

A few months after the publication of this paper, I was pleased to learn that someone else was pursuing these very same issues. Joseph Zepeda makes an independent case in his article "‘To whom my own glad debts are incalculable’: St. Augustine and human loves in *The Four Loves* and *Till We Have Faces*".¹²⁰ I cannot do full justice to it here, but I would briefly like mention the most relevant similarities and dissimilarities between our studies.

First, Zepeda also notices (independently, for Gregory is not cited) that Lewis wrongfully calls Augustine's unnamed friend "Nebridius". Second, he also critically examines Lewis's objection, and argues that Augustine's constellating category is not security but *truth*. In book four, Augustine is really talking about *how* we ought to love the things we love, not how we ought to choose *which* things to love. He regrets loving his friend as if he was immortal, mocking his deathbed baptism, and thus estranging a friend and jeopardizing a soul. Thirdly, and most delightfully, Zepeda also turns to one of Lewis's literary works for support. *Till We Have Faces*, he says, expresses admirably the very Augustinian ideas that were missed in the account of *The*

¹¹⁹ Lewis 1960a, 137.

¹²⁰ Zepeda 2012.

Four Loves. Finally, both papers agree that if Lewis indeed misunderstood, it is not a fundamental disagreement.

But here Zepeda drops the “if”. Lewis obviously misunderstands. My paper does not definitely settle the matter. While neither of us “blame him too much for losing count of the incalculable on this occasion”¹²¹ (to borrow Zepeda’s brilliant wordplay), this is for different reasons. I would forgive a miscalculation because Augustine can at times be ambiguous; Zepeda, because Lewis made “such marvelous use of these very ideas in the novel”.¹²²

The other noteworthy difference between the studies relates to method. Whereas I provide more scholarly background on Lewis and sources on Augustine, Zepeda provides more source material by Augustine. His is very much a narrowly drawn textual investigation, both of Lewis and Augustine. This exposes the most striking *limitation* in *my* presentation: I fail to provide the disputed passage in book four in full. As a result, being fully privy to only one side of the correspondence (not unlike in *The Screwtape Letters*), the reader is forced to look it up for him- or herself. Luckily, Augustine’s *Confessions* is readily available, even if Lewis’s annotated copy of it is not.

Lewis’s annotated copy of the *Confessions* nonetheless exists (see Chapter 2.3 above). So does his copy of *De Civitate Dei*. A worthwhile undertaking would be to analyse Lewis’s notes in order to deepen and test existing studies on Augustine’s influence on Lewis, including the present study. Such an undertaking might lead to new discoveries across disciplines.

One of the many questions that call for examination, or re-examination, is Lewis’s understanding of *ordo amoris*. Some scholars suspect that Lewis “seems to lack an *ordo caritatis*”,¹²³ but surely this must depend on what we mean by it. Lewis refers to a hierarchy of loves often in his works, and in *The Abolition of Man* he writes approvingly: “St Augustine defines virtue as *ordo amoris*, the ordinate condition of the affections in which every object is accorded that kind of degree of love which is appropriate to it.”¹²⁴ Meilaender detects a hierarchical approach in Lewis’s theology of love, even if he “did not

¹²¹ Zepeda 2012, 26.

¹²² Zepeda 2012, 26.

¹²³ Saarinen 2006, 171 n. 14.

¹²⁴ Lewis 1943, chapter 1. Lewis refers to “*De Civ. Dei*, xv. 22. Cf. *ibid.* ix. 5, xi. 28”.

want to take over the medieval model in its full-blown complexity”.¹²⁵ What exactly *did* Lewis take over?

My hypothesis is that, for Lewis, a right order of loves does not depend on quantifiable ingredients, like comparative feelings or scalable intrinsic values. If Lewis subscribes to any “order of loves”, it is primarily in terms of *loyalty*. A right order of loves is a right order of loyalties. “Inordinate love” in such a scheme would mean misplaced ultimate loyalty. This insight may even help to discern the difference between *worship* (love due to God only) and *veneration* (love due to people), and thus contribute to the solution to a pressing ecumenical challenge.¹²⁶

3.4 Essay 4: C. S. Lewis and Anders Nygren on Spiritual Longing

3.4.1 Objectives

The fourth and final essay, entitled “*Praeparatio Evangelica – or Daemonica? C. S. Lewis and Anders Nygren on Sehnsucht*”, is also the last of the three Nygren-specific essays. It has two main objectives. First, it aims to critically re-evaluate the longstanding assumption that Lewis’s distinction of need-love and gift-love is a translation of Nygren’s eros/agape distinction. This parallel is found to be simplistic and in need of greater nuance.

Building on this, the essay then evaluates the novel and rival assumption that it is actually Lewis’s concept of *spiritual longing* (Joy or *Sehnsucht*), not need-love, that captures most of Nygren’s eros. Essay one had argued that Joy is relevant to the Nygren debate, and that Joy somewhat overlaps with Nygren’s eros. In essay two, I went as far as to suggest that Joy might actually be a more comprehensive translation of eros than need-love. Essay four can be described as the outburst of the compounded impetus to

¹²⁵ Meilaender 2003, 74–75, here 75.

¹²⁶ I have, in fact, already begun to work on this. See my article “Worship, Veneration, and Idolatry: Observations from C. S. Lewis”, in *Religious Studies* (Lepojärvi 2014a). See also Lepojärvi 2012b and 2014b.

investigate the issue properly. This is done by carefully comparing and contrasting Joy with the *three* main features of Nygren's eros.

I must mention one important *exclusion*. As Lewis and Nygren's opposite stances on the nature and value of spiritual longing are gradually unpacked, the astute reader might begin to discern (correctly) a possible convergence with the contemporaneous debate among Catholic theologians over *desiderium naturale* that followed Henri de Lubac's (1896–1991) seminal *Surnaturel* (1946). No discussion of this convergence is forthcoming, however, except as a topic for further research. In terms of subject, analysis, and contribution to existing literature, this essay is already the most ambitious of the four.

3.4.2 Contributions

This essay begins by noting two remarkable facts about *The Four Loves*. First, Nygren is not mentioned, although *The Four Loves*, beginning with its opening page, is a conscious rebuttal of what Lewis elsewhere calls Nygren's "central contrast" between self-regarding and selfless love. Second, the refutation of this contrast, the denigration of *eros* and its separation from *agape*, is executed without adopting or even using Nygren's terms. I suggest that both decisions are part of a deliberate apologetic strategy to bypass certain defences and avoid the paradox of polemics.

Professional theologians and philosophers, however, immediately recognized the relevance of *The Four Loves* to the Nygren debate. In chronologically enumerating scholars who have made this connection, this essay makes use of source material from 1960 that, to the best of my knowledge, has not seen print since its original appearance. Lewis's own terms *need-love* and *gift-love* overcome Nygren's central contrast. But they are not, so I argue, perfect translations of Nygren's eros and agape. To suggest a parallel, as many scholars have done, between Lewis's need-love/gift-love distinction and Nygren's eros/agape distinction is not inaccurate, but I show through conceptual analysis that it has not been accurate enough.

Moreover, a close reading of Lewis's references to Nygren (none of which are in *The Four Loves*) reveals that Lewis himself was from the very outset conscious of the complexity of Nygren's model. This makes it unlikely that he ever intended his need-love and gift-love as exhaustive translations of eros and agape. This assumption has been our doing, eisegesis instead of exegesis. The fact alone that Lewis introduces a third element (appreciative love) should prevent us from hasty equations.

The other cluster of contributions results from testing the hypothesis that, in Lewis's taxonomy of love, his concept of spiritual longing (Joy) is actually a better translation of Nygren's eros.

On the one hand, the analysis shows that, in the end, no one thing in Lewis's mental repertoire *can* serve as a perfect translation on Nygren's eros. The reason for this is that eros, Lewis believes, is an *abstract caricature* of love (just as Nygren's agape is a caricature of excellent love). Lewis posits Joy as *a real good* in sync with a real universe, so by its very nature it cannot be an unqualified equivalent of Nygren's unreal eros. On the other hand, the analysis shows that Joy positively incorporates *all three* main features of Nygren's eros, while avoiding their derogative exaggerations. Joy is essentially a *purified version* of eros.

The differences that remain allow us to see what Lewis thought amiss in Nygren's three-fold portrayal of spiritual longing as a form of love. First, Joy (like eros) is a value-based love of desire, but (unlike eros) it is non-hierarchical and neither idolizes nor demonizes nature. Second, Joy is eudaimonistic and teleological, but it is not simply egocentric and possessive. Finally, Joy is a human drive toward the divine, but it is not delusionally self-sufficient. These differences are more or less agapic. This is not unexpected. Lewis believes that Nygren tried to force on the conception of love artificial either-or contrasts that real love, in all of its forms, overcomes.

The essay also proves that Lewis himself was conscious of the incongruities between his and Nygren's understanding of spiritual longing. This lends further support to my conviction that Lewis constructed his model in conscious opposition to Nygren. In Lewis's theological vision, far from obfuscating the Gospel, spiritual longing is a God-given desire that prepares

the way for it.

3.4.3 Further Research

Ignorance of Gilbert Meilaender's study *The Way that Leads There* (2006) prevented me from consulting its chapter "Desire", making this omission one of two *limitations* of essay four. Meilaender discusses human desire, including spiritual desire, in the thought of a dozen or so theologians – among them Nygren and Lewis. I found out about this important secondary source too late but managed to acknowledge it in a footnote. The only upshot of my ignorance and lost opportunity is that the present essay remains entirely independent.

The other limitation relates to my first objective. The list of scholars who since 1960 have noted the parallel between need-love/gift-love and eros/agape is incomplete. While I did not state it openly, I intended to give a comprehensive overview. Since completing this study, however, I realized that I had failed to mention two additional references. In her doctoral thesis (1987), Paulette G. Sanders notes: "In fact, what Nygren has just described [as eros] sounds like Lewis's definition of Need-love."¹²⁷ More recently, in his article "Love, the Pope, and C. S. Lewis" (2007), Cardinal Avery Dulles writes: "Eros and agape (which he [Lewis] prefers to designate as 'Need-love' and 'Gift-love') can exist, he says, on either the natural or supernatural plane."¹²⁸

I now turn to three possible avenues for further research encouraged by the results of essay four. "I have no time for mere *either-or* people", Lewis told his friend Dom Bede Griffiths in a letter in 1951.¹²⁹ The reader whose mind jumps to Nygren cannot be blamed. While Nygren is not mentioned, the main topic of discussion is the relation between the natural and supernatural. Interestingly, the only theologian who is mentioned is the one who famously bridged the two planes. A number of events, Lewis explains,

¹²⁷ Sanders 1987, 21. Nygren is discussed briefly on pp. 19–21.

¹²⁸ Dulles 2007. Dulles notes that *Deus Caritas Est* ("the Pope" is Benedict XVI), unlike *The Four Loves*, makes "no mention of appreciative love".

¹²⁹ Lewis 2006, 111.

“have so far kept me from tackling [Henri de] Lubac.” So far as I can tell, this is the sole reference to de Lubac in all of Lewis’s writings, so we do not know whether he ever got around to reading him.¹³⁰

Lewis’s direct knowledge of the contemporaneous *desiderium naturale* debate is, of course, less interesting than the debate itself. As explained above, I had to exclude it from this essay, but *Lewis’s position in the debate* could be constructed retrospectively. A good starting point would be an analysis of spiritual longing in the Cosmic Trilogy. The *hrossa* – an unfallen race – desire union with God, perhaps signalling where Lewis’s sympathies lie. In nonfictional works, like *Surprised by Joy* and “The Weight of Glory”, Lewis makes observations about the complex, mysterious but real, connection between pre- and post-lapsarian longing and between pre- and post-conversion longing. In speaking, for instance, of an unknown desire that at first seems disconnected from (because it cannot desire directly) its ultimate object, Lewis could possibly even contribute to the discussion.

Another worthwhile undertaking would be to re-evaluate *Rudolf Otto’s influence on Lewis*. Work has been done on this front,¹³¹ but at least two questions merit closer scrutiny. First, like Denis de Rougemont (see Chapter 3.2.3), Otto may have influenced Lewis in more astonishing ways than previously fathomed. I claimed that the accounts of Joy in *The Pilgrim’s Regress* and *Surprised by Joy* echo “sometimes almost verbatim” Otto’s account of numinous awe. For textual evidence, one may begin by comparing their accounts of (1) numinous awe and Joy as *sui generis* phenomena, (2) the primacy of experience for correct interpretation, (3) the request to discontinue reading without such experience, (4) the disproportion between the stimuli and the experience, and (5) the ultimate object desired for its own sake.¹³²

¹³⁰ Karl Rahner (1904–1984), another key player in the *desiderium naturale* debate, is not mentioned at all.

¹³¹ Relevant existing studies include Carnell (1999), Downing (2005), Saarinen (forthcoming 2016), and especially Barkman (2015).

¹³² Snippets to whet our inquisitorial appetite: (1) Numinous awe is “perfectly *sui generis* and irreducible” (Otto 1953, 7) and Joy is “distinguished from [all] other longings” (Lewis 1998a, xii). (3) Whoever has not experienced numinous awe “is requested to read no farther” (Otto 1953, 8) and whoever has not experienced Joy “need read this book no further” (Lewis 1955, 23). (5) The object of numinous awe is desired “for its own sake” (Otto 1953, 32) and the object of Joy is desired “for what it is in itself” (Lewis 1955, 218). Cf. Barkman (2015) advises

Secondly, while Lewis felt comfortable using *Sehnsucht* and Joy interchangeably, he did not adopt the term *numinous awe*. Why not? It was probably not only to avoid technical theological jargon. They are closely related experiences but may not be perfectly synonymous. In fact, Lewis in one place seems to distinguish between the two. At one – rather late – phase of his experiences of Joy he *entered*, he says, “into the region of awe”.¹³³ This may imply that Joy approaches numinous awe as its religious content and relation to the divine begins crystallize. There may also be other factors that set them apart. Like his copies of the works of de Rougemont and Augustine, Lewis’s copy of Otto’s *The Idea of the Holy* is annotated and invites closer inspection.¹³⁴

The third profitable project would be “fitting together what Lewis says about love in *The Problem of Pain* with what he says about various forms of love in *The Four Loves*”.¹³⁵ Essay four noted how one of the several reasons why Lewis’s need-love is an inadequate translation of Nygren’s eros is that, at least in *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis says that in one sense we can speak of *divine* need-love. Surprisingly, this aspect seems entirely absent in *The Four Loves*. There we find only the echoes of *The Problem of Pain*’s “ringing declaration”¹³⁶ of divine impassibility: “[What] can be less like anything we believe of God’s life than Need-love?”¹³⁷ and again: “This primal love is Gift-love. In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give.”¹³⁸ There is, however, necessarily no fundamental contradiction between the two works, written two decades apart. Some (not all) of the friction diffuses when we mark, as Meilaender has, that it is God’s love in the *original act of creation* (“this primal love”) that is pure giving; but

against exaggerating the significance of Otto’s influence on Lewis. He also points to some evidence (123–124) suggesting that Lewis read *The Idea of the Holy* in 1936, which is *after* the publication of *The Pilgrim’s Regress* (1933) but long before *Surprised by Joy* (1955).

¹³³ Lewis 1955, 208.

¹³⁴ Lewis’s copy of *The Idea of the Holy*, found in the Walter Hooper Collection at Chapel Hill, may not be the only work by Otto that Lewis was “deeply influenced by” (Lewis 2006, 980). The Wade Center has copies of Otto’s *Religious Essays: A Supplement to ‘The Idea of Holy’* (London, 1931) and *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man: A Study in the History of Religions* (London, 1943/1951?), both annotated.

¹³⁵ Wolterstorff 2010, 4 n. 3.

¹³⁶ Wolterstorff’s description (2010, 5).

¹³⁷ Lewis 1960a, 9.

¹³⁸ Lewis 1960a, 144.

“in that very act of giving he binds himself to man so that he [*thereafter*] forever desires fellowship with him”.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, the total absence of divine need-love in *The Four Loves* continues to baffle me.

¹³⁹ Meilaender 2003, 59 n. 23.

4 REMAINING SCRUPLES

The previous chapter offered synopses of the objectives and contributions of each essay. It also introduced topics for further research. This final chapter discusses two remaining scruples. The first is Lewis's curious respect for Nygren. The second is the question I myself am most likely to direct my energies to after the completion of this study.

4.1 Lewis's Curious Respect for Nygren

Lewis's respect for Nygren is curious because the rift between their theologies of love could not be steeper. "Lewis would not, in the end, agree with all of Nygren's views"¹⁴⁰ is somewhat of an understatement; it would be better to stress, with Caroline Simon, how "Lewis had serious disagreements with Anders Nygren".¹⁴¹ My three Nygren-specific essays go even further by suggesting that significant points of agreement between Lewis and Nygren on the theologies of love and longing are scant. The agreements are not even peculiarly Nygrenian, but are rather pan-Christian platitudes like "God is love" and "God first loved us" and so on. For that reason, they are rather superfluous to "the Nygren debate", however crucial theologically otherwise.

This raises a perplexing question. Why did Lewis not criticize Nygren more openly? Lewis often chooses not to name his opponents or those with whom he is interacting. There is no mention, for example, of the literary critic F. R. Leavis (1895–1978) in *An Experiment in Criticism*, but the "Vigilant Critics" are clearly the Leavisites. Elizabeth Anscombe (1919–2001) is not mentioned in the revised *Miracles*. Augustine appears simply as "a famous Christian" in *Mere Christianity*. At other times Lewis does criticize authors, even ones he most emphatically respects like Augustine and Spenser, and even his contemporaries like Otto and de Rougemont. Omitting Nygren from *The Four Loves* in particular, I suggested, may have been a

¹⁴⁰ Vaus 2004, 164.

¹⁴¹ Simon 2010, 154.

deliberate apologetic move. Why give publicity to an author you think only muddies the waters?

This is not to say that Lewis never mentions Nygren in his popular writing. He does, as we have seen. But on these occasions Nygren is never criticized – or not explicitly. Let the following passage from *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* exemplify the curious mixture of respect and distrust Lewis had for Nygren’s work.

Earthly glory would never have moved us but by being a shadow or *idolon* of the Divine Glory, in which we are called to participate... Arthur is an embodiment of what Professor Nygren calls “Eros religion”, the thirst of the soul for the Perfection beyond the created universe... [Arthur’s experiences] must, it seems to me, be taken for a picture not of nascent ambition and desire for fame but *either of natural or celestial love; and they are certainly not simply a picture of the former...* The seeker must advance, with the possibility at each step of error, beyond the false Florimells to the true, and beyond the true Florimell to the Glory.¹⁴²

The connections to Joy are conspicuous. The reference to Nygren, however, is frustratingly ambiguous. Is Lewis paying “Professor Nygren” a compliment by summoning him as a theological authority? It is difficult – indeed, without prior knowledge of Lewis’s epistolary critique, it is almost impossible – to catch the *swallowed disagreement* with Nygren, implicit even here. The seemingly innocent words “not simply a picture of the former” carry the innocuous punch. “A precious straw, this last hesitating sentence, to show where the wind is blowing.”¹⁴³ For Nygren, spiritual longing could in reality *never* be “celestial love”. Natural love it can be, but only in the postlapsarian sense: nascent ambition or desire for fame at best, sinful self-deification at worst. Lewis’s more “optimistic” interpretation confuses loves that, in Nygren’s original theory, should never be confused. The student or literary critic reading this passage without theological training could hardly surmise what is at stake here.

But we have not fully answered the question. What accounts for Lewis’s unwillingness to criticize Nygren publicly? I propose three additional reasons. I begin with the most speculative one.

¹⁴² Lewis 1954, 382–383, emphasis added (except *idolon*). See Chapter 2.4 for the full passage.

¹⁴³ A recalcitrantly memorable sentence from Burnaby (2007, 64) on Augustine.

Did Lewis ever read *both* parts of Nygren's magnum opus? It has already been established that in the mid-1930s Janet Spens and Lewis were discussing *only* part one, since part two – two-thirds of the entire work – was not published until 1938 and 1939 in two separate volumes. Given Lewis's keen interest in Nygren's theory it seems almost inconceivable that Lewis would not have known about part two and not read it. But this is exactly what I think happened. One should think twice about proving a negative, but the case is quadruply strong.

First, as already noted, there is no trace of any edition of Nygren's book in Lewis's library. On the one hand, this is not surprising: the copy Lewis read in the 1930s was a loan. But apparently Lewis was not moved by this encounter to acquire his own copy of part one. Why would he acquire the sequel? At least there is no historical evidence that he did. Secondly, there seems to be no textual evidence either. None of the ten references to Nygren in Lewis's writings pertain to part two's main thrust (more of this below) in any meaningful way. Thirdly, in his letter to Mary Van Deusen in the mid-1950s Lewis writes: "Nygren is surely wrong *if* he says that merited love is sinful."¹⁴⁴ Does Lewis not know what Nygren's thoughts are on this matter? Fourthly, the letters to Mary Van Deusen are from 1954 and 1955 – soon after the publication of the one-volume edition of *Agape and Eros* in English in 1953. Is this a coincidence? It seems fair to suppose that *she* had recently read it, and that is why the questions that were topical for Lewis in the 1930s were now topical for her in the 1950s. Van Deusen had the full text at her disposal. Lewis did not.

The difference this makes is this. *Lewis was probably not aware of the full scope of Nygren's project.* Nygren was not merely contrasting Pagan eros with love in the New Testament, which is the line of argument in part one. The remaining undulating history of Christian love is described in part two – up to its "natural solution in the Reformation".¹⁴⁵ Only then do we learn of Augustine's botched "synthesis of *eros* and *agape*" which Luther "smashed to

¹⁴⁴ Lewis 2006, 555, emphasis added. See Chapter 2.4 for the full passage.

¹⁴⁵ Nygren 1969, xv.

pieces”.¹⁴⁶ The combined book’s historical and theological climax is “Luther’s Copernican revolution” in his “campaign against Catholic Christianity”.¹⁴⁷ Augustinianism is the bogey of the story; Luther, “the man who vanquishes it”.¹⁴⁸ Lewis had respect for Luther but not uncritical respect, and though “Protestant” was not for him “a dyslogistic term”, the history of the Reformation was a “tragic farce”.¹⁴⁹ It is Augustine, not Luther, whom Lewis salutes as “a great saint and a great thinker to whom my own glad debts are incalculable”.¹⁵⁰ How would Lewis have reacted to Nygren’s full portrayal of the history of Christian love? Would he have objected to Nygren’s caricatures of both Augustine and Luther had he been aware of them?

The second reason for Lewis’s charitable outlook is less controversial or nebulous. *Lewis was grateful to Nygren*. We remember what Outka said about Nygren’s critics being “legion, but few have ignored or been unaffected by his thesis”.¹⁵¹ Lewis’s letters are particularly forthcoming in this respect. Nygren had shaken him up in the 1930s. Twenty years later, Lewis looks back with gratitude: “The great merit of Nygren, so far as I’m concerned, was that he gave one a new *tool of thought*: it is so [very] convenient and illuminating to be able to talk (and therefore to think) about the two elements of love as *Eros & Agape*.”¹⁵² His appreciation of Nygren is reserved but genuine: “Still his book was well worth reading: we both have the [very] important idea of Eros and Agape no clearly in our minds, and can keep it after we have let all

¹⁴⁶ Nygren 1969, 560.

¹⁴⁷ Nygren 1969, 681ff.

¹⁴⁸ Nygren 1969, 562. While Luther provided the theological grammar for a coup d’état, Nygren believes Augustine’s view of love continues to dominate Christian thought. “Not even the Reformation succeeded in making any serious alteration. In Evangelical Christendom to the present day, Augustine’s view has done far more than Luther’s to determine what is meant by Christian love” (540).

¹⁴⁹ Lewis 1954, 37. In a letter to an Italian Catholic priest, Don Giovanni Calabria (1873–1954), later canonized by John Paul II in 1999, Lewis writes: “That the whole cause of schism lies in sin I do not hold to be certain. I grant that no schism is without sin but the one proposition does not necessarily follow the other. From your side Tetzl, from ours Henry VIII, were lost men: and, if you like, Pope Leo from your side and from ours Luther (although for my own part I would pass on both a lighter sentence). But what would I think of your Thomas More or of our William Tyndale? All the writings of the one and all the writings of the other I have lately read right through. Both of them seem to me most saintly men and to have loved God with their whole heart” (Lewis 2004, 815; translated from Latin by Martin Moynihan). While Lewis was familiar with many of Luther’s works, there is no evidence that he was ever moved to acquire any copies for himself.

¹⁵⁰ Lewis 1960a, 137.

¹⁵¹ Outka 1972, 1. See Chapter 1.3 above.

¹⁵² Lewis 2006, 538. See Chapter 2.4 for the full passage.

his exaggerations fade out of our minds.”¹⁵³ By the time he sat down to write *The Four Loves* in the late 1950s, Lewis, as an academic, has earned his spurs, and as a Christian, is at the height of his maturity. He can afford to assimilate the good and, unless he sees pressing reasons not to, forgo the bad. “[T]he ripest are kindest.”¹⁵⁴

The third explanation for Lewis’s public silence about his disagreement is this. *Lewis may have never clearly resolved the theological implications of spiritual longing.* In *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, as recounted in essay four, Lewis had said that disparaging spiritual longing is “evil”.¹⁵⁵ But in *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis qualifies his legitimation of spiritual longing with a mild reservation: “Such is my opinion; and it may be erroneous.”¹⁵⁶ Austin Farrer has commended Lewis for such temperance: “Is romantic yearning an appetite for heaven, or is it the ultimate refinement of covetousness? One cannot but respect his sense of responsibility in voicing his doubt about what so deeply moved him.”¹⁵⁷ While Lewis was confident that this yearning had been for him *praeparatio evangelica*, it is possible – nay, fairly probable – that Nygren’s warnings helped curb this confidence from swelling into overconfidence. “Perhaps this secret desire is part of the Old Man and must be crucified before the end. But ... hardly any degree of crucifixion or transformation could go beyond what the desire itself leads us to anticipate. Again, if [my] opinion is not true, something better is. But ‘something better’ – not this or that experience, but beyond it – is almost the definition of the thing I am trying to describe.”¹⁵⁸

So much for Lewis’s definition of spiritual longing. What about his definition of love?

¹⁵³ Lewis 2006, 555. See Chapter 2.4 for the full passage.

¹⁵⁴ Lewis 1955, 204.

¹⁵⁵ Lewis 1998a, xvi. See the discussion of this in essay four.

¹⁵⁶ Lewis 1998b, 123.

¹⁵⁷ Farrer 1965, 40. Austin Farrer (1904–1968), the English theologian and philosopher, was a close friend of Lewis.

¹⁵⁸ Lewis 1998b, 123–124.

4.2 Lewis's Curious Definition of Love

Lewis's definition of love is curious because he does not seem to have one. While many of Lewis's other writings have "formulations that sound like definitions of love",¹⁵⁹ the one book where you would expect to find one, *The Four Loves*, fails to provide one. This, one might say, is mildly surprising.

I am not being particularly brave or original. It was noted already in the direct aftermath of its publication: "By distinguishing four loves and including so much under each", observed Martin D'Arcy in his otherwise favourable review, "interest is kept up, but the meaning of *love itself* risks being vague and fluid".¹⁶⁰ Simon puts it in Aristotelian language: "Lewis ... never gives us an explicit definition of the genus of which [the various loves] could be considered candidate species."¹⁶¹

Whatever the reason for the omission, in one sense it is wise. It is safer to discuss "features" and "modes" and "elements" of love than to advance a purportedly sufficient definition of "love itself". Like a bar of soap, one might lose it if squeezed too tightly. But then, one might lose it by gripping too loosely. To say that Lewis withheld his definition of love because he trusts "our capacity to grasp the rudiments of love from lived experience"¹⁶² is perhaps to let him off the hook. *The Four Loves* remains open to the charge of "a tangle of analysis"¹⁶³ and "a dizzying variety of formulations".¹⁶⁴ What is "simply love, the quintessence of all loves whether erotic, parental, filial, amicable, or feudal"¹⁶⁵?

¹⁵⁹ Meilaender 2003, 60–61. For a concatenation for these formulations, see Meilaender 2003, 59–70. The most promising appears in a discussion on war: "Love is not affectionate feeling, but a steady wish for the loved person's ultimate good as far as it can be obtained" ("Answers to Questions on Christianity" in Lewis 2000, 317–328, here 318). See also Lewis 2006, 722 n. 95.

¹⁶⁰ D'Arcy 1960, emphasis added.

¹⁶¹ Simon 2010, 148. Simon (2010, 148–149) offers a helpful summary of the various divisions of love found in *The Four Loves*.

¹⁶² Simon 2010, 148. I agree that the variety of formulations serve as "mutually illuminating schemata" (Simon 2010, 147), at least to some extent. But yet another recurring distinction that Lewis fails to explain is the difference between "pleasures" and "'loves' (properly so called)" (Lewis 1960a, 21).

¹⁶³ MacIntyre 1960, 13.

¹⁶⁴ Meilaender 2003, 59.

¹⁶⁵ Lewis 1954, 505. Lewis is here not trying to define love but to convey what Shakespeare in some of his Sonnets says about love.

The British science fiction television series *Blake's 7* (1978–1981) took its name from the hero Roj Blake and his team. The composition of characters changed considerably throughout the series. Some actors left, others were replaced. By the end of season four, there was no Blake, nor were there seven of them. Something similar has happened to my view of *The Four Loves* over the course of this study. There are not “four”, nor are they even “loves”.

What is needed, I believe, is a *total re-examination* of the purpose and nature of *The Four Loves*. What is its underlying genus of love? What exactly does Lewis mean by charity? What is a good lover?

I suspect an analytical investment in Lewis's original *radio talks* on love (1958), on which the book is based, might pay a helpful dividend.¹⁶⁶ The talks are almost a third shorter than the subsequent book, making their argument leaner and more focused. The opening sentence is at once blunt and revealing: “In Greek, there are four words for love.” Not, that is, four loves, but four words for love. Moreover, the concepts *need-love* and *gift-love* are entirely missing; instead, Lewis speaks simply of “need” and “gift” in love. The leaner frame also helps to see how Lewis's main concern is *ethics*, not theology per se.¹⁶⁷ Lewis's original acceptance of the invitation to give a series of radio talks on a topic of his own choosing reads: “The subject I want to say something about in the near future, in some form or other, is the four Loves – Storge, Philia, Eros, and Agape. This seems to bring in nearly the whole of Christian *ethics*.”¹⁶⁸

The first three of these, I now think, are not loves at all. They are best understood as simply *human relationships* and *feelings*.¹⁶⁹ As relationships, they provide the *venue* for love proper (the space and occasion for it), and as feelings, they provide *fuel* for love (the material and motivation). Towards

¹⁶⁶ The only existing study of the radio talks that I know of is a rhetorical analysis (Keefe 1968). For an amusing account of the hiccups involved in production of the talks, see Hooper 1998a, 86–90.

¹⁶⁷ This may in part explain, for instance, the book's rather one-sided doctrine of God (see Chapter 3.4.3). It has been superadded to the original frame.

¹⁶⁸ Lewis 2006, 941, emphasis added. The letter continues: “Wd. [Would] this be suitable for your purpose? Of course I shd. [should] do it on the ‘popular’ level – not (as the four words perhaps suggest) philologically.”

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Simon 2010, 148: “Though at one point he [Lewis] calls love ‘mere feeling’, this is not a serious attempt of definition, even of the natural loves.”

the end of the book, Lewis refers to the natural loves as “the general fabric of our earthly life with its affections and relationships”.¹⁷⁰ If I am right, Lewis could have spoken on a dozen “loves” in this sense.

Finding the genus of love (“simply love”) is tricky but within the bounds of possibility. Perhaps surprisingly, it is to be found not in the “fourth” love, charity/agape, but rather in the tripartite schema of need-love, gift-love, and appreciative love. For Lewis, love is essentially *an appreciative and receptive commitment to the other’s flourishing*. Our relationships deserve to be called love only when we can say to the beloved: “It is good that you exist! I will involve myself in your well-being, and welcome your love in return.” How do we succeed in this? This is where charity, rightly understood, steps in.

Lewis’s idea of charity is most misunderstood and thus most in need of meticulous re-examination. It has been advocated that despite the differences between Nygren and Lewis, “Nygren’s definition of Agape, however, fits Lewis’s definition [of charity] given in *The Four Loves*”.¹⁷¹ Indeed, in my correspondence with ordinary readers of *The Four Loves*, something like Nygrenian understanding of agape is regularly read into charity, the climax of the book. But this is misguided. Lewis’s charity is very unlike Nygren’s agape. It is not an abstract, celestial solvent that is miraculously poured down from heaven to somehow replace our earthly loves. It is something much more practical: the unity of character.

William Morris wrote a poem called *Love is Enough* and someone is said to have reviewed it briefly in the words “It isn’t”. Such has been the burden of this book. The natural loves are not self-sufficient. Something else, at first vaguely described as “*decency and common sense*” but later revealed as *goodness*, and finally as the *whole Christian life in one particular relation*, must come to the help of the mere feeling if the feeling is to be kept sweet.¹⁷²

Once we discard our Nygrenian lenses, we notice that “decency”, “common sense”, and other “moral principles” appear over and over again in every chapter as protectors and sustainers of love. Take affection, for instance:

Affection produces happiness if – and only if – there is common sense and

¹⁷⁰ Lewis 1960a, 154–155; see also 156 (“love-relations”).

¹⁷¹ Saunders 1987, 21.

¹⁷² Lewis 1960a, 154–155, emphasis added (except for *Love is Enough*).

give and take and “decency”. In other words, only if something more, and other, than Affection is added. The mere feeling is not enough. You need “common sense”, that is, reason. You need “give and take”; that is, you need justice, continually stimulating mere Affection when it fades and restraining it when it forgets or would defy the art of love. You need “decency”. There is no disguising the fact that this means goodness; patience, self-denial, humility, and the continual intervention of a far higher sort of love than Affection, in itself, can ever be.¹⁷³

In his essay “We Have No ‘Right to Happiness’”, Lewis says something strikingly similar: “When two people achieve lasting happiness, this is not solely because they are great lovers but because they are also – I must put this crudely – good people; controlled, loyal, fair-minded, mutually adaptable people.”¹⁷⁴ Notice the breakdown of character into a unified list of virtues: self-control, loyalty, fair-mindedness, adaptability, and so on. A good lover displays these qualities in eminence. As a younger man, Lewis had written approvingly how “the virtues of a good lover were indistinguishable from those of a good man”.¹⁷⁵ In the end, he retains this definition of a good lover. Good lovers are good people.

¹⁷³ Lewis 1960a, 24; see also 66–67, 107–108, 127, 131–134. Lewis discusses “common sense” also in *Studies in Words* (1960b, 146–150) and *The Discarded Image* (1964, 164–165).

¹⁷⁴ Lewis 2000, 388–392, here 391.

¹⁷⁵ Lewis 1936, 199.

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6 ESSAYS

The four essays are reprinted here in either the format of their original publication (essays 1–3) or in the format in which they were accepted for publication (essay 4). For the outline of essay-specific objectives, see Chapter 2.1 above. For more information on the four journals, see Chapter 2.5.

Essay 1

“C. S. Lewis and ‘The Nygren Debate’,” in *The Chronicle of the Oxford University C. S. Lewis Society (or Journal of Inklings Studies)*, vol. 7 (2010) pp. 25–42

Essay 2

“Does Eros Seek Happiness? A Critical Study of C. S. Lewis’s Reply to Anders Nygren,” in *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, vol. 53 (2011) pp. 208–224

Essay 3

“A Friend’s Death: C. S. Lewis’s Disagreement with St. Augustine,” in *Sehnsucht: The C. S. Lewis Journal*, vol. 5/6 (2012) pp. 67–80

Essay 4

“Praeparatio Evangelica – or Daemonica? C. S. Lewis and Anders Nygren on *Sehnsucht*,” in *The Harvard Theological Review*, accepted for publication (2015) pp. 1–31

